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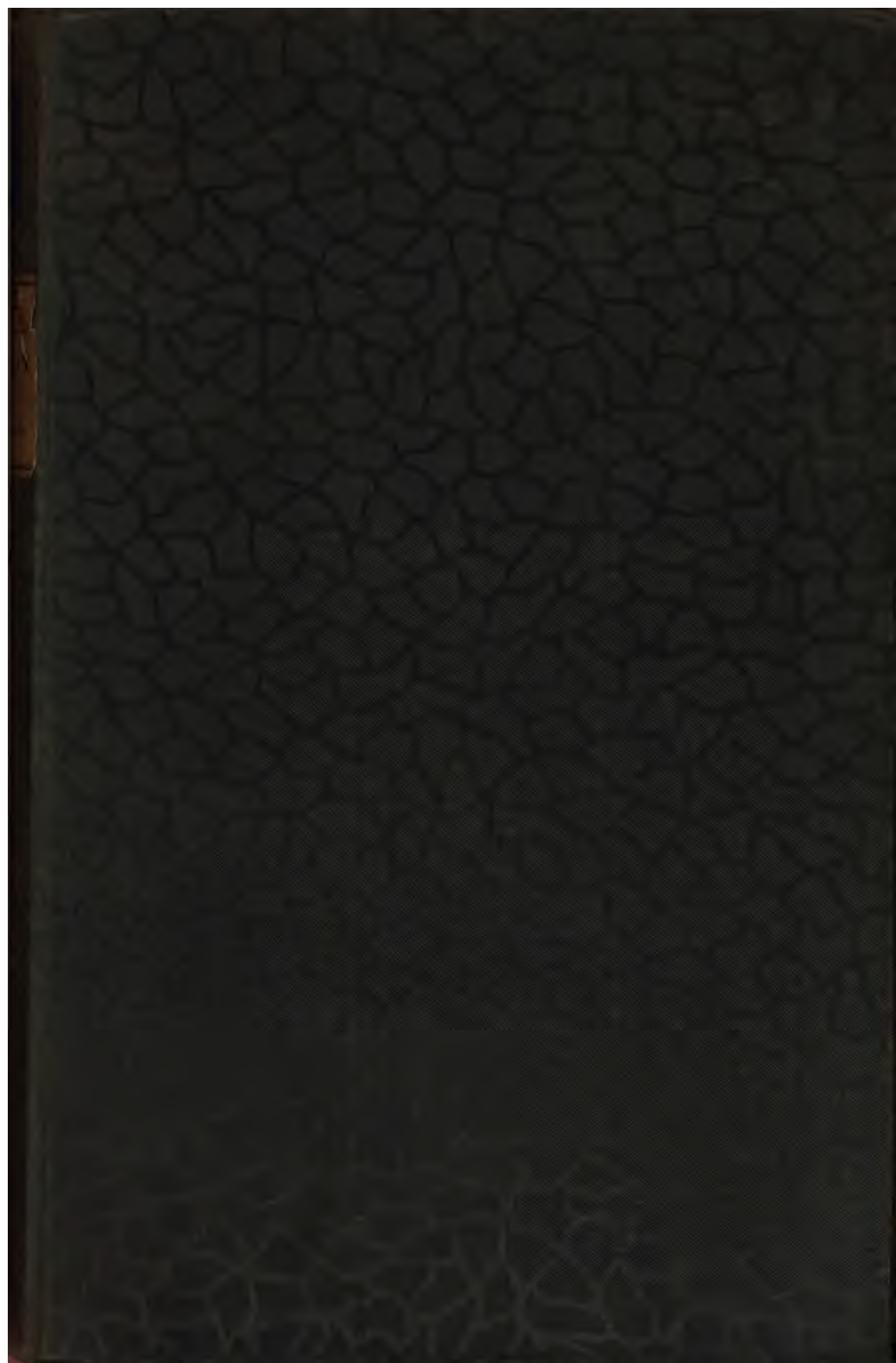
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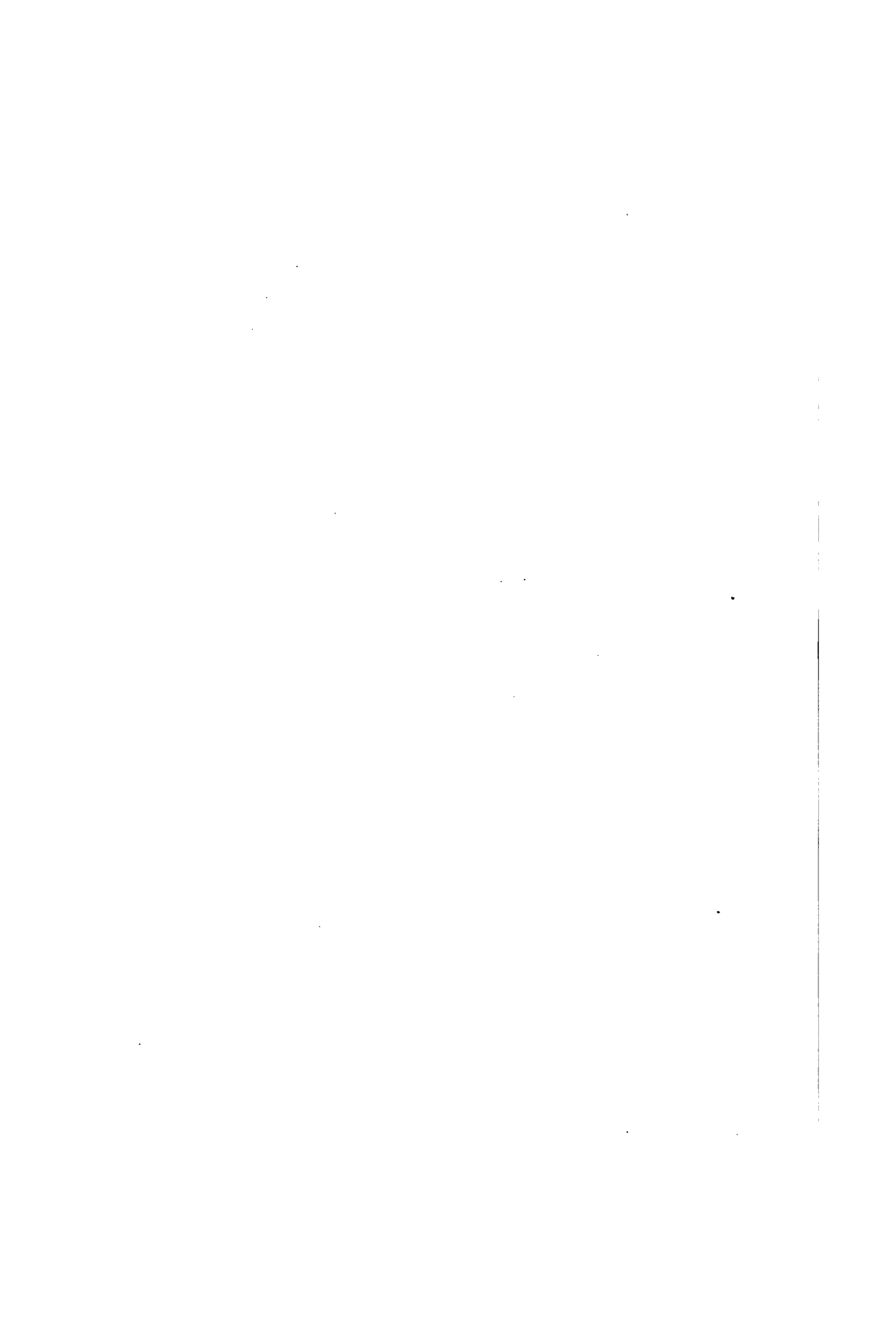
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## NATURAL THEOLOGY.



SOME  
THOUGHTS  
ON  
NATURAL THEOLOGY,



SUGGESTED BY A WORK,

ENTITLED

“VESTIGES OF THE NATURAL HISTORY OF CREATION.”

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# NATURAL THEOLOGY.

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## CHAPTER I.

### ARGUMENT STATED.

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THE argument in favour of a creating and presiding intelligence, drawn from the design so conspicuous in all parts of the universe, which has been illustrated by the supposition of a man crossing a heath, and pitching his foot against a watch, the construction and mechanism of which would show that it must have been the work of a skilful artisan, has been so clearly stated, and so ably applied by Paley, in the first chapters of his *Natural Theology*, and must be so well known to all who have paid any attention to that science, that it would be superfluous in us to re-state it in any form, however condensed, for the sake of recalling it to the recollection of our readers. But, inasmuch as the recent discoveries of geology and zoology have led men to think that the universe has come into its

present state by means of the working of certain fixed and invariable laws, termed the laws of Nature, which have been in operation for an indefinite period of time, and which still continue, and that these are sufficient to account for the origin of animal as well as of vegetable life, whence some shallow reasoners have attempted to subvert, and some weak-minded people have been led to overlook, the proofs of the existence of a Deity; we think that the following extension of the simile on which Paley's argument is founded, may be with advantage brought before those who fancy that they see anything dangerous to natural religion, in these recent advances of science.

Any man who had examined the construction of a watch, or, indeed, of any time-piece, would feel most certain that it was the work of a skilled artisan, and could not fail to admire the genius of him who had planned and constructed such a wonderful piece of mechanism. If, on further inquiry, he were to find out that the different parts of this curious article had been put together not by the *hands* of an artisan, but by a machine wonderfully contrived and admirably adapted for the purpose, and which never, or at least scarcely ever, failed in accomplishing its end, his admiration for the skill of the artisan would be further increased, and he would not for one moment entertain the idea that the

wheels, springs, and other component parts of the time-piece had been subjected to the action of the machinery by mere chance, or that the time-piece was merely one of the possible combinations that might have been formed by matter coming under the influence of the machine, or that the machine itself had not been planned and constructed by an intelligent workman. The power and skill of the maker of the time-piece would be again magnified in his eyes, if he were to find reason to believe that its springs, wheels, and other component parts had been made out of the raw material in some less finished form, and submitted to the action of the machine, by means of another machine equally adapted for its purpose, and that the component parts of the machines themselves had been put together in the same manner. Every step made in the abridgment of labour by machinery would afford more evidence of the power and skill of the master manufacturer, and would render any supposition of a fortuitous disposition of materials more absurd. We need scarcely add, that the simpler the process by which this abridgment of labour was effected, the more wonderful would the whole contrivance appear to be.

Suppose, now, that this abridgment was so far continued, that the hand of man was not required in any of the various processes to which the metals



had to be subjected between the state in which they are found in the mines, and their appearance in the form of a time-piece, and that the whole of the wonderful apparatus which would be required for effecting these processes, was set in motion by some very simple moving power, that of steam for example, and had itself been constructed in the same manner; would not such a contrivance be looked upon as one of the wonderful productions of constructive genius? Could any one say that it was by mere chance that the time-pieces had been formed out of the metals? And the greater the simplicity of the first machine in this apparatus, the more conspicuous would be the genius of him who had designed it, and by whose directions the work had been carried into execution; the more palpable would be the absurdity of ascribing any part of it to chance.

We have chosen to illustrate our subject, by supposing the abridgment of labour to take place in the construction of a watch, because others have chosen this piece of mechanism, perhaps the most wonderful of human construction, to elucidate the arguments which are the foundation of their reasonings on natural theology, though we are aware that the idea of its being carried so far in this particular instance may seem rather chimerical. Nevertheless, it will answer our purpose as well,

as if we had chosen for examples the cotton or the woollen manufactures, in which the abridgment of labour and the simplification of machinery are making wonderful progress every day. Who, for instance, would hesitate to ascribe the production of a piece of cloth or calico to the skill of a manufacturer, after the inventions of Watt and Arkwright had come into use, as much as before? Who would now hesitate to do so, though inventions for superseding manual labour, both in the construction of the machines themselves and in the working of them, are daily taking place? Last of all, who could fail to recognise and to admire the master-minds of those who had invented these machines? It is perfectly possible to conceive the same abridgment of labour taking place in the construction of a watch, and it is peculiarly fitted to be introduced into a discourse the object of which is to demonstrate the existence, the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of the Creator, from the infinitely more curious and more wonderful specimens of His workmanship, which are everywhere exhibited to us.

We may further illustrate our subject by supposing that the first piece of mechanism constructed in this manner was merely a pulley attached to a weight, or a wheel set in motion by an elastic

spring; that, by different additions made by machinery, it became a time-piece of the simplest and rudest sort, which served merely to indicate the hour of the day; that after serving this purpose for some time, it was again subjected to the influence of a machine, by which some additional apparatus was added to it, which made it indicate the minutes as well as the hours; that after another lapse of time, it acquired some new apparatus in the same manner, by which it was made to show the days of the week; that after another long interval it was, by some further addition, made to show the age of the moon; and that by successive improvements, each of which was made after intervening periods of considerable length, it became as complete as the clock at Strasburgh, which has justly been reckoned one of the wonders of the world. The construction of such a clock in such a manner, would certainly furnish us with a proof of skill and ingenuity superior to anything that has hitherto been exhibited by man; and would demonstrate the superior wisdom and power of the master-mind of him, by whom it had been planned and executed.

Perhaps the following comparison may be more immediately applicable to some of the hypotheses of creation that have lately been brought before the scientific world. A time-piece may be pro-

duced out of raw material by machinery in the manner we have supposed, which time-piece may be so formed, that after a certain time it produces its like, which new one in due course of time does the same; and this process of successive generation may be supposed to be continued for any indefinite period. A considerable time after the formation of the first instrument, some new useful property may be discovered in one of its descendants, which none of the intervening ones had been known to possess. There are many different ways by which we can suppose this to have been brought about. Some new wheel may be set in motion by the continuous action of the spring, wheels, or pendulum, for several generations, or some constant progressive motion might have been given to the whole of the internal apparatus, which would at length set a-going some piece of mechanism hitherto unperceived, and so develop some of the ulterior purposes for which the time-piece had been intended, and which the maker must have had in view at the time that he constructed the first, or, rather, at the time that he arranged the machinery for the construction of the first; each instrument being supposed to produce another in the state that it was when it became a parent, so that the continuous action of any of these forces would be the same in each new time-piece, as if it

acted on it during the whole of the time that had elapsed since the creation of the first time-piece ; or many of its useful functions, unknown and undeveloped at first, might be developed and brought into notice by the new circumstances in which it might be placed. To every one of the instruments so formed might be attached a pedometer. As long as the instruments remained stationary, the nature and use of this part of the apparatus could not have been known or observed, and it could not have been brought into use, or have attracted observation, until it had been carried by a pedestrian. Possibly, in consequence of long disuse, some parts of the apparatus last referred to might not work easily at first, so that its property of measuring distance would be only gradually developed by its being subjected to motion. There might be apparatus so attached which no circumstances could develop, if they had lain idle a certain length of time. Nevertheless, it would be folly to assert that the pedometer had been created by the motion of the pedestrian. In the same manner, we may suppose the instrument to have been furnished with a thermometer, in which of course the height of the mercury would remain unchanged, while the temperature of the surrounding atmosphere continued so ; a barometer, the use of which would be unknown, as long as the

weight of the superincumbent atmosphere remained unaltered; an apparatus for determining the latitude, which was first called into action by the requisite change of position. Nobody could say that the variation of the temperature, or of the weight of the superincumbent atmosphere, or the change of place of the instruments, had created these apparatus. The first instrument might have been furnished, at the time of its creation, with all the apparatus necessary for these purposes, which might subsequently have been brought into use among its descendants by the different circumstances in which they were placed, but which must, at the time of their formation in the parent instrument, have been constructed for the express purpose of being used in its offspring, when placed in and developed by the circumstances that would render them useful; or they might have been formed by some mechanism contained in the interior of the parent instrument, and working through several generations, which must have been placed therein for the express purpose of forming these apparatus in its progeny, and with the foreknowledge that they would afterwards be useful; or they might have been added to some of the instruments by the action of a machine, as at first supposed; or they might have been formed by some combination of

these three methods, which, as they are all supposed to be under the regulation of law, may with perfect justice be compared to those laws, which in cosmogeny are termed "natural." We may suppose any one of these methods to have been adapted for constructing and developing the different apparatus attached to the instruments, and with respect to each of these we would put the question—Which shows greater skill and power on the part of the artisan, the improving of the instrument by any one of these systems, or the constructing new instruments with different improvements, at various periods adapted for different circumstances? To this question we think that any one will immediately reply—Undoubtedly the former.

We may also suppose instruments endowed with a peculiar property of adapting themselves to varieties of climate and temperature. The compensation balance, by means of which the regulator of a watch is rendered unaffected by changes of temperature, has justly been considered one of the greatest improvements in this department of mechanics. A person, who, though ignorant of this contrivance, was aware that the metals of which the interior mechanism of a watch is composed were liable to be contracted or expanded by cold or heat, and observed, nevertheless, that watches went well in different climates and in different

seasons, might think that different watches had been constructed for different temperatures, and look upon this adaptation as a proof of the skill and power of the watch-maker. Surely, when he came to understand the nature and property of the contrivance above referred to, he would ascribe it to the design of the watch-maker, and acknowledge it to be a greater proof of his skill and power than if he had made different watches in the manner he had at first supposed.

We can in the same manner suppose the barometers or pedometers that are formed in this manner, so connected with the regulators of the time-pieces, as to counteract any effect which rapid motion or elevation above the surface of the earth might have upon their rate of going. The discovery of such arrangements would indubitably demonstrate the design of the maker, and would indicate far greater power and wisdom on his part, than if he had made one set of watches to be used by people engaged in sedentary occupations, another for active pedestrians; one species of clock that would keep accurate time at the surface of the earth, another to be used only at a certain elevation above the level of the sea.

It is also possible to imagine many developments taking place in various modes in different instruments, according to the divers circumstances that



brought into exercise their properties, which were, at first, latent and unobserved. Some of these qualities might not be fully acquired, until the circumstances which tended to bring them into use had acted on several successive generations of the instruments; and the manner as well as the degree in which they were ultimately developed in each might vary. Many combinations of latent properties developed differently, and in a greater or less degree in each, might arise in the several instruments. Each of these would, by the law of generation which we have supposed to exist, produce a new instrument, endowed with the same properties to the same extent, as was the parent at the time of its producing a new one. Thus we should have many and various instruments apparently totally different in their construction, and intended for every variety of purposes entirely different, as also modifications of instruments of the same sort, in which the same properties were more or less developed, all descended from the same ancestor. Although the different properties of the instruments might have been thus acquired, there would be the same proof of design, and a far greater proof of power and forethought on the part of the maker, than if he had constructed a number of different instruments, to answer every different purpose that might be required, and different sorts of

the same instruments varying according to changes of time, condition, and circumstances.

We will use one more illustration, because it seems to us to be peculiarly fitted to illustrate some cases of adaptation in natural theology, which were formerly ascribed to special fiats on the part of the Creator, but have latterly been thought by some to be the results of some general law. It is well known that, in a horizontal dial, the inclination of the gnomon to the plane of the horizon must be equal to the latitude of the place for which it is intended, and that the plate of the dial itself must be graduated differently for different latitudes, according to a well-known formula. So that, at present whenever a horizontal dial is seen showing correctly the solar time in any place, it is evident that the dial must have been designed by its maker for that place, or at least for some place of that latitude. Suppose, now, that some piece of mechanism were discovered whereby any variation in the angle of the gnomon were made to change the graduation of the dial plate in the manner required by the formula, and that this angle itself was made by some contrivance or other to vary with the latitude of the place to which it might be transported; would not one single dial so constructed show more design, wisdom, and foresight, on the part of the maker, than any number of dials constructed on

different plans for different latitudes ? What would be thought of one who said that the discovery of the existence of such an apparatus took away the proof of skill or knowledge on the part of the maker, which the dials were formerly supposed to afford ? It need scarcely be added, that the simpler the mechanical contrivances by which these corresponding variations were effected, the more worthy of our admiration would the skill and genius of the maker appear.

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## CHAPTER II.

### APPLICATION OF THE ARGUMENT.

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THE application of these arguments to natural theology is easy ; we might almost say, self-evident. To whatever point of the universe we turn our attention, whether we contemplate the heavens that are above, or the earth beneath, or the water that is under the earth ; the grass and the herb yielding seed after their kind ; the tree yielding fruit, whose seed is in itself, after his kind ; the whales and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly ; the fowls that fly above the earth in the firmament of heaven ; or, lastly, man, and his adaptations, both mental and physical, to the state in which he has been placed ; in all we find examples of design and of power more wonderful, than in the most curious pieces of mechanism constructed by human

ingenuity. To whatever part of nature the investigations of science have conducted man ; wherever, by its mighty aid, new wonders are unfolded to him, he finds fresh traces of a benevolent and powerful Creator, which, if they were all enumerated, it might almost be said that the world itself would not contain the books that should be written. The most striking of these have been brought before our notice in the Bridgewater Treatises, written by men who had attained the greatest eminence in the different departments of science which they had undertaken to illustrate. Well, indeed, may the student of nature exclaim, in the words of the Psalmist—" Oh Lord, how manifold " are thy works, in wisdom hast thou made them " all ; the earth is full of thy riches ; so is the great " and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts." Not less astonishing is the harmonious adaptation and the working of the whole system. Everything about seems to form part of a chain of the deepest contrivance of an incomprehensible author, whose works are magnificent as on the first day\*.

We are forced to conclude that everything in which design is conspicuous is the workmanship of a designing mind, and from the relations which the different specimens of design bear to one another,

\* Goëthe.

from their harmonious adaptation, and from the unity of plan manifest throughout, we infer them to have been the works of the same designer. The reasonings by which these conclusions have been arrived at have been lucidly detailed by modern writers, and appear to be incapable of refutation. The majority of mankind had been in the habit of regarding all these beautiful examples of divine workmanship, as having been formed by separate and isolated acts of the creative power, and these opinions had always been supported by the most devout theologians, who regarded them as necessary for a due conception of the personality of the Deity, almost for a belief in His very existence. It may then easily be conceived that many excellent men must have viewed with no small degree of pious horror the various theories of several of the most eminent natural philosophers, who maintained that all these wonderful specimens of art which had hitherto been the objects of their devout contemplation, as evincing the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Almighty, had been produced by the action of certain fixed and unvarying operations of nature, and taxed their wits to discover, and their ingenuity to defend, a system of laws which they asserted would be sufficient to explain the existence of the universe, both animate and inanimate, in its present condition. Their horror of works of this

description must have been much increased by the avowed atheistical opinions of some of these writers, who, not content with the pre-eminence of genius with which they really had been endowed, were anxious to show their superiority to what they deemed the prejudices of the vulgar, by rejecting the ordinarily received notions of the world having been made by an omnipotent Creator. And it cannot be denied that, even in modern and less prejudiced times, many good people view with fear and trembling the recent discoveries of geologists and physiologists, fearful lest men's conceptions of the Creator should be rendered doubtful or imperfect, by making them acquainted with the general plan and method by which He thinks fit to work. Surely as modern theologians have rested their proofs of the existence and the personality of the Deity mainly on the many marks of design and contrivance that are apparent throughout the works of creation, it will be sufficient to dispel their fears on this score, if they are enabled to perceive in the several hypotheses of creation which have been promulgated by philosophers, the same undeniable proofs of wisdom, power, goodness, and design which have been shown to exist in the different objects of the universe, considered without reference to any general plan of creation. Indeed, by aid of the foregoing illustrations, we

trust that it may be easily shown, that the hypotheses which have been lately brought forward, allowing them to be true, would not only detract nothing from, but would even make more manifest the attributes of the Creator, which have called forth the admiration of reflecting people. It may therefore be worth our while briefly to review some of these hypotheses which have been most in vogue, and to show how the conclusions we have drawn from the supposed analogies of the formation of watches and other instruments may be made to bear upon them.

Buffon, one of the most pleasing of naturalists, and one whose vast information on the subject to which he devoted himself, has entitled him to a great deal of consideration, supposes, that in the same manner that we can make moulds, by which we can give to the exterior of a body any figure that we please, Nature can make moulds, by which she can give, not only the exterior figure, but also the interior form, and that the world is full of living particles, which have a constant tendency to marshal themselves in these moulds, and thus attempts to explain the formation of the bodies of the animals and vegetables which at present replenish the earth. We are not aware that this celebrated philosopher has in any part of his works attempted to account for the formation of these



moulds to which he ascribes so much. And surely, without some such explanation, the most timid theologian can, in this theory see nothing dangerous to natural religion. For, if the bodies of plants and animals abound with specimens of design, so numerous, and so wonderful, as to leave no doubt of their maker; it is plain that the same marks of design must exist in these moulds, which are able to give to the plants and animals not only the exterior figure, but also the interior form; the same proofs of the existence of a designing mind that have been drawn from the latter, must also be found in the former. And, as we remarked already, if any person who, after having minutely examined the construction of a watch, was admiring the genius of him who had planned and constructed such a wonderful piece of mechanism, was subsequently to discover that the different parts of this curious and wonderfully made article had been put together not by the hands of an artisan, but by a machine, wonderfully contrived, and admirably adapted for the purpose, and which never, or at least scarcely ever failed in its object, his admiration of the skill of the artisan would be further increased; and he would never entertain the idea that the wheels, springs, and other component parts of the time-piece had been subjected to the action of the machine, or that the machine itself

had been constructed by mere chance. It is evident that precisely the same train of reasoning is applicable to Buffon's theory of the formation of plants and animals by moulds, if it should be true; in this mode of creation we should behold equally cogent proofs of the existence of a designing mind, as in the things alleged to have been so created; and we should also be constrained to acknowledge an exhibition of far greater power and wisdom, than in separate and unconnected exertions of creative power. And if any reasonable explanation of the formation of these moulds, and of the causes of the influence they exert over living particles, were by any future naturalist to be given to mankind, still, as in the supposititious case of a machine for the construction of watches, the same proofs of a designing mind would be apparent, and proofs of still more exalted power and wisdom would be unfolded. No advance made in this department of human knowledge could possibly induce men to suspect that the things which they had hitherto regarded as affording the clearest evidence of the existence of a designing mind, had been created by mere chance, and the more the simplicity and the regularity of the process by which they were created, became apparent, the more they would see to admire in the wisdom and power of the Creator. And if, at any time, it

should be allowed to man to penetrate so far into what are now deemed the mysteries of nature, as that he should find reason to believe that all things he now beholds in the universe, animate and inanimate, were merely the results of a primeval arrangement of matter, being subjected to certain known influences, such as the law of gravitation, and those of electricity and chemistry, or perhaps even to the former alone, and that he had a knowledge of the whole history of the creation, and was able to trace its entire process, from the time the world was a chaos, till it attained its present state, and was peopled with animate beings, whether by means of Buffon's moulds or otherwise, would he not, in such a primordial arrangement of matter, see proofs of design at least as convincing, as those upon which natural theologians have grounded their arguments, as coming under the more immediate observation of mankind? With such results, would it not be palpably absurd to assert that such an arrangement was the result of mere chance? It has been said, that the examination of the eye alone ought to cure any person of atheism; would not the knowledge of the manner in which matter of a heterogeneous description had been arranged, so that by being subjected to the action of one or more fixed laws for an indefinite length of time, it should undergo various modifications,

and at length become an eye, have at least the same convincing effect? Much more would such an arrangement of matter by which any number of instruments, if we may use the word, equally curious, equally useful, and all bearing certain relations to one another, were formed in the same manner, afford the most incontrovertible proofs of the existence of an Almighty Creator.

Until those who maintain that the earth and its inhabitants, the air, the water, the firmament, have all been produced by generation, explain their meaning with some degree of precision, it would be needless to bestow much attention on their theories, or to attempt, by any process of reasoning, to dispel the doubts that any such an assertion may raise in the mind of the most timid well-wisher to natural religion. If to the word generation, we attach the ordinary, and only intelligible meaning, that of like producing its like, the parents of the present works of the creation must have exhibited specimens of design as great and as marvellous, as those which we have been taught to admire in their offspring; and when we behold them in the latter, they afford to us the same cogent proofs of a designing mind, as if the parent works of the creation in which they first existed were actually before our eyes: the only difference in the inference being, that the supposition to which we have alluded, if it were

true, would show that a designing mind must have existed at the time that this process of generation began, even supposing it to have been going on from all eternity. For as it has always been maintained that the Almighty must have existed from all eternity, antitheists will gain nothing by asserting this generative process to have existed for an indefinite period of time. If by generation is meant some sort of electro-chemical process of nature, we think that our hypothetical examples of time-pieces having been formed by machinery are perfectly illustrative of any such mode of working, as the powers of light, heat, and electricity are asserted to have performed the same part in the formation of the things of the universe, that we have supposed to have been accomplished by a machine in the formation of watches, and the inferences that we drew therefrom, that greater power and wisdom were required for the construction of the former by machinery than by hands, are equally true of any of these processes. But, if by generation be meant some unknown and recondite operation of nature, which those who make such frequent use of the word do not themselves understand, and are consequently unable to explain to others, it must be allowed that the proofs of a designing mind rest on exactly the same foundation, as they did before any such theory of creation was

broached. If the things created contain most undeniable proofs of contrivance and design, the inferences drawn therefrom are not invalidated by the assertion that they have been produced by some unknown and wonderful process, which, if it were known, could only tend to make more manifest the wisdom and foresight of the designer.

The theory of Lamarck, that pieces of soft ductile matter endowed with propensities or appetencies for particular actions, carried on through a long series of generations, work themselves into suitable forms, and at length acquire, though by obscure and almost imperceptible improvements, an organization fitted to the action which their respective propensities lead them to exert; for instance, that a piece of soft ductile matter would gradually put out wings, if endowed with a propensity to fly; that another such piece of matter, endowed with a propensity to swim, would gradually put out fins; and that another, if endowed with a propensity to crawl or walk, would gradually put out feet; shall be considered in connection with the development theory, as broached in the "Vestiges of the Natural History of the Creation." We confess that we are unable to understand how the former theory alone can be made to account for all the numerous specimens of design and contrivance with which the works of the creation abound, and the adaptations of some

organs which could never have been attempted, prior to the existence of these peculiar organizations. It appears to us, that it would be as absurd to attempt to account, by this theory, for *all* the wonderful organizations with which the creation abounds, as it would be to account for the formation of a watch by saying that the metals of which it was composed, having been endowed with a natural tendency to indicate the time of the day, had marshalled themselves into a suitable form. To begin with the first of the works of the creation, to which Paley applies the argument of the watch. Can the formation of an eye be explained on any hypothesis of this sort? To us it appears that, prior to the formation of some such organ, animals could have no more idea of seeing, than a man born blind has now, and without this they could have had no appetencies by which this organ could have been constructed. The world abounds with instances of prospective contrivances, which it would be equally difficult to explain on this theory alone, unaided by any other.

We shall, therefore, consider M. Lamarck's hypothesis in conjunction with that propounded in the "Vestiges of the Natural History of the Creation," in which latter it is included, and of which it may be regarded as in some degree the parent. The hypothesis to which we refer is, "that the

“ several series of animated beings, from the simplest and oldest to the highest and most recent, are the results, *first*, of an inherent impulse, in the forms to advance in definite times by generations, through grades of organization terminating in the highest dicotyledons and vertebrata ; these grades being few in number, and generally marked by intervals of an organic character, which we find to be a practical difficulty in ascertaining affinities ; *secondly*, of another inherent impulse connected with vital forces, tending in the course of generations to modify organic structures in accordance with external circumstances, these being the adaptations of the natural theologian. These phenomena may be contemplated as ordained to take place in every situation, and at every time when and where the requisite materials are presented ; in other orbs, as well as in this, in any geographical area of this globe which may at any time arise, observing only the variations due to the difference of materials and conditions. It seems, after all, an obvious idea, that a chemico-electric operation, by which germinal vesicles were produced, was the first phenomena in organic creation, and that the second was an advance of these, through a succession of higher grades, and a variety of modifications in accordance with laws of the



“ same absolute nature, as those by which the  
“ Almighty rules the physical department of  
“ nature.”

At present we are not going to discuss the probability of the truth of this hypothesis, nor to weigh the soundness of the arguments derived from zoology or geology by which its author has endeavoured to support it, though we may occasionally, in the course of our dissertations, refer to some of the illustrations of which he has made use. With the validity of the former we have nothing to do ; our only object is to consider whether this or any similar hypothesis of creation would, if shown to be true, in any way weaken the proofs of the existence of a designing mind which theologians have hitherto derived from nature, and also, whether the explanation of the adaptations of the natural theologian given in the above-quoted passage detracts aught from their value as illustrations of the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of the Creator. We shall, therefore, endeavour to illustrate our arguments by recurring to the analogous examples of the processes which we supposed to have been adopted, in the manufacture of time-pieces and other instruments, which appeared to us to furnish not inapt illustrations of the works of the Author of the Universe. We have considered the manufacture of watches, clocks, and various pieces of

mechanism of all sorts, from the simplest pulley moved by a weight, or a wheel set in motion by a spring (the latter is, perhaps, not an inapt illustration of irritability, which Lamarck supposes to be the foundation of all animal life), to the most curious and complicated, such as the clock at Strasburgh, or any combination of time-piece, pedometer, barometer, and thermometer, that can be conceived, and supposed them to have been formed by certain laws of progressive development, beginning with the simplest, and terminating with the most curious and complicated; and asked whether the formation of all these curious and manifold instruments, by some such general plan as we supposed, was not manifestly the work of a designing mind, and whether it did not indicate much greater power, wisdom, and foresight, on the part of the maker, than if the instruments had been made separately, and without any general order of succession, or assistance of machinery. We also gave several examples of instruments endowed with a power of self-adaptation, which we need not now repeat, referring among others to the compensation balance as a discovery that had marked the ingenuity and established the reputation of its inventor. We showed that these principles of adaptation indicated much greater design and ingenuity on the part of the maker than the

making different sets of instruments, each of which was suited for a different variety of circumstances. Surely we should hardly expect to find any endowed with so little candour, or besotted by such egregious stupidity, as to acknowledge, that on the latter supposition they must have been the work of an intelligent artisan, yet doubt the fact on having this principle, the invention of which must have considerably enhanced the fame of the artisan, explained to him. Yet such is modern theism, and modern atheism.

To us it has often seemed matter of wonder that men should not be content with the same arguments, in that which relates to the Author of the Universe, that they make use of in discoursing about the productions of a painter or a sculptor. If any one were to go into the British Museum, and there behold some fine piece of sculpture, he would not for one instant doubt that there must have existed a sculptor who had brought the marble into the form in which he beheld it; and he would not be inclined to alter this opinion, if he were to see reason for thinking that all the statues which he beheld had been hewn out of the marble by some sort of mechanical apparatus, which had produced them in a certain order, beginning with the simplest and least-chiselled forms, and terminating with the most curious and exquisitely wrought

figures. Yet if he passes into the zoological department, where he beholds works far more wonderful, and productions of nature, in which design is, if possible, much more apparent than in those to which we have made allusion, he is led to doubt if they are the productions of an intelligent maker, on being told that they have come into existence in a certain order, according to the degree of organization which they exhibit, beginning with the simplest infusories, and terminating with the highest of the mammalia.

Perhaps the real cause of this strange difference in the mode of reasoning in the two cases is, that men are apt to regard the Creator and Nature, Nature and the Author of Nature, as two distinct powers. How much confusion would be avoided, what a number of errors would cease to perplex, if men would satisfy themselves as to the real meaning of the word "Nature" before they began to argue about these subjects. To us the only intelligible meaning of the word, as used by the naturalists, appears to be the working of the laws of the universe, or at least of that part of them which is known to mankind. When Buffon says, that Nature makes certain moulds, he can only mean that these moulds are made by the working of the laws of the universe. When it is said that an chemico-electric operation of nature may some-

times usher living forms into existence, it is meant that these living forms are brought into the world by the working of the laws of electricity and chemistry. If this is not what is meant by Nature, it must be a person that is indicated—that very person whose existence natural theologians wish to demonstrate. In the former case, it is precisely analogous to the working of the machine that makes the instruments in the cases that we presupposed. If design is as evident in the works of Nature, as in the productions of the machine, it is as plain that Nature must have had an author, as that the machine must have had a maker. The more the machine supersedes the necessity of the intervention of the artisan, the greater must have been the genius of the maker. The more we are able to ascribe to Nature, the greater must the power of the Author of Nature appear to us. If every work of art was made by one and the same instrument, would not the extent of the power and genius of the instrument-maker be more clearly seen? If it be shown that all things that are made, are made by Nature, and that without her has not anything been made that is made, is not the omnipotence of the Author of Nature made more manifest? Why should good men be less pleased to contemplate their Creator as the Author of Nature, than as one who does every thing by special fiats. Is it that they have not

been hitherto accustomed to regard the power of their Creator and Nature as antagonistic? Or rather, have they not, as we shall show hereafter, been wont to compare the power of the Deity with that of man; and to look upon Nature as something that works as independently of His power, as of man? In other words, have they not fallen into the error of anthropomorphising the Deity? Ought they not then to rejoice in the discoveries of science, which show that He whom they have been taught to worship as their Creator, their preserver, their benefactor, is, in reality, the author of Nature, of that very power which seemed to them so independent of Him. Must they not admit the truth of the observation of Lamarck?—

“ If I prove that Nature herself performs the  
“ prodigies that have just been cited; that she has  
“ created organization, life, even feeling; that she  
“ has multiplied and varied, in manners that are  
“ unknown to us, the organs and the faculties of  
“ organized bodies, whose existence she sustains  
“ or propagates; that she has created in the ani-  
“ mals, from the sole view of design, which esta-  
“ blishes and directs their habits, the source of all  
“ the actions, of all the faculties, from the most  
“ simple to those which constitute instinct, indus-  
“ try, finally reason; ought I not to recognise in  
“ that power of Nature, that is to say, in the order

“ of existing things, the execution of the will of its  
“ sublime Author, who has been able to will that  
“ she should have that sublime faculty ? Shall I  
“ admire less the greatness of the power of that  
“ First Cause of all, if it has pleased Him that  
“ things should be so, than if by so many acts of  
“ His will He had been occupied and continued to  
“ occupy Himself still with the details of all the  
“ particular creations, of all the variations, of all  
“ the developments, and bringing to perfection of  
“ all the destructions and all the renovations, in  
“ one word, of all the changes, which generally  
“ take place in the things which exist.”

We believe that there is no part of this theory that is thought more dangerous to natural religion, than that of spontaneous generation. There was no one phenomenon in the universe on which theologians founded more arguments in proof of the existence of a Creator, than that of animal life ; there was none which seemed so entirely beyond the power of nature to originate ; and while they were willing to allow the agency of secondary causes in other things, the transition from organic matter to animal, or even only to vegetable life, seemed an event which required the interposition of the Deity. It is curious to observe how anxious most of the writers on the subject of natural theology are, that all the fossil remains of the

skeletons found imbedded in the different strata should be shown to belong to animals of a different order from those by which the globe is at present tenanted; what stress they lay on the fact that, among the remains so found, there is no bone which could possibly have belonged to the body of a man or a monkey; whence they infer that these two last, at least, must have been created since the occurrence of the convulsions which destroyed the animals to which these bones belonged. It certainly is strange that, when men see before them so many examples of the method by which the Deity ordinarily works—such as the birth of a plant from the seed deposited in the ground and its subsequent growth; of the production of seed by these same plants; of the birth, nutrition, and growth of animals, in all of which design is conspicuous,—they should think it necessary to show that the first generation of these animals must have been first brought into existence by a miraculous interposition of the Almighty. It may be judged, then, with what suspicion and mistrust some look upon the opinions of Lamarck, who supposes that the whole tribe of infusories are brought into the world by what he terms spontaneous generation, on the hypothesis already quoted of the author of the “*Vestiges*,” that the first origin of life was a chemico-electric operation of



nature, by which the nucleated vesicle was produced, and the relations of the experiments by which it is thought that the insect called the "Acarus Crossii" may be produced. In what a different light would these hypotheses be viewed, if men were to cease to draw any distinction between the Creator and the Author of Nature. They would then be glad to ascribe the most wonderful phenomena of the universe, even the origin of organic life, to the working of Nature's laws; inasmuch, as in every phenomenon so produced, they are able to perceive an example of wisdom and power incalculably greater, than in the performance of any miracle. In examining a watch or a clock that had been made by machinery, we should not be less convinced that it had been made by an intelligent workman, if it were shown that the hair-spring in the former, or the pendulum and weights in the latter, had been originally arranged so as to produce motion, by the same machine as that by which the rest of the apparatus had been made. Why, then, should men fear to admit the hypothesis, that pieces of gelatinous matter may be endowed by nature with irritability, which is said by Lamarck to be the foundation of animal life, or that a chemico-electric operation of nature by which germinal vesicles were produced was the first phenomenon of organic creation? Nor can we see anything dangerous to religion, even

in the asserted possibility that men may discover a method of bringing animalculæ into life ; inasmuch as it does not seem to us that such a discovery would in any way disprove the necessity of an intelligent Author of Nature. There is nothing more wonderful in the conversion of an acorn into an oak, or of small grains of seeds into beautiful and odoriferous flowers, or in the producing a young bird from an egg put into an oven, than in the production of an insect from albumen. Men constantly make use of the means which nature has put into their power, to effect the former changes, and we have no doubt that to one who was utterly ignorant of the ordinary phenomena of nature—to one, for instance, who had spent his life in a dungeon or in a mine,—the former transmutations would appear as wonderful, and would seem to resemble an act of creation, as much as the latter. Why, then, should the possibility of man's accomplishing the one be deemed to supersede the necessity for an intelligent Author of Nature, more than the other ? The argument of design conspicuous in the working of nature remains the same as before. As well might the merest drudge in any factory, who had learned how to apply a machine invented by Watt or Arkwright to some of its simplest purposes, deny the intelligence of either of these great men, as the man who fancied that he had discovered the

method of ushering into life an animalcula by natural means, deny the existence of an intelligent Author of Nature. We must here repeat that we do not presume on scientific grounds to offer an opinion as to the probability of the truth of any of the hypotheses of creation or of spontaneous generation ; but we were anxious to expose the fallacy of the opinions of those who thought that the fundamental truths of natural religion were in any way confirmed by their being able to prove that men and monkeys must have been created by a special interposition of the Deity, and to show how groundless were the fears of others who believed that a single well-substantiated instance of the *Acarus Crossii* having been produced in albumen by electricity, was subversive of all the happiness and consolation which they might derive from religion in this world, or of their hopes and prospects for the next.

After all that has been written by recent theologians on the argument of design, on which they have made all their proofs of the existence, the nature and the properties of the Deity to depend, a very few words will suffice us for all that we wish to say concerning one of the most remarkable of atheistical works, and one which in spite of the unsoundness of its reasonings, perhaps caused more sensation at the time of its appearance than any

other on the same subject, entitled, "*Système de la Nature*." So completely, indeed, does this one argument of design overturn all that has been urged in this book, in support of what is commonly called atheism, that we should not have thought that it required any notice on our part, if the recent advances of science might not appear to some to be to a certain extent corroborative of the propositions maintained therein. In the work referred to we find it stated,—“ Thus Nature, in its most extended  
“ signification, means the grand total which results  
“ from the assemblage of different matters, from  
“ their different combinations, and the different  
“ movements which we see in the universe. Nature,  
“ in a sense less extended, or considered in each being,  
“ is the whole which results from this essence, that  
“ is, the properties, the combinations, motions, or  
“ modes of action which distinguish it from other  
“ beings.” In a subsequent chapter in the same work, we find it stated, that, “ That which we call  
“ order in nature is only a manner of being, or disposition of its parts rigorously necessary. In every  
“ other assembly of causes, of effects, of forces, or of  
“ universes, except that which we see in a totally  
“ different system of matter, if it were possible, some  
“ arrangement would necessarily be established,  
“ some substances, more heterogeneous, or more discordant, put into action, or brought together by a

“ series of necessary phenomena, some order would be  
“ formed among the whole of them; and here, then, is  
“ the true notion of a propriety, which may be defined  
“ as an aptitude to make a being such as it is in itself,  
“ and such as it is in the whole, of which it makes a  
“ part. Thus, I repeat it, order is only necessity re-  
“ garded relative to a series of actions, or the united  
“ chain of causes and effects, which it produces in  
“ the universe. For example, what is order in our  
“ planetary system, the only one of which we have  
“ any idea, but the series of phenomena which take  
“ place according to necessary laws, by which those  
“ bodies that compose it are ruled.” Now, concern-  
ing this line of argument, we wished to remark,  
that if any grand total which results from the  
assemblage of different matters, their different com-  
binations, and different movements, does not appear  
to answer any end or to serve any purpose, though  
we allow that there must have been some cause, or  
chain of causes to have brought together and com-  
bined these different matters, we do not suppose  
these causes to have been guided by any presiding  
intelligence; but we do suppose them to have been  
guided by some intelligence, whenever we see that  
the assemblage of different matters which results  
from their actions, seems evidently designed to  
answer some end or purpose. If we see a heap of  
mud in a field, which apparently can answer no

purpose whatever, though we allow that certain causes, such as the combined action of wind and rain, or others, must have concurred to have brought together the dust and water, and to have mingled them in a certain proportion, yet we do not suppose these causes to have been guided or put into action by any presiding intelligence, and we allow that, for aught we know to the contrary, there might have been more wind or less rain, and the heap of mud might not have been formed at all, or the matters of which it is composed might have been combined in a different proportion. But, if we see a substance formed out of a certain combination of lime, sand, and water, which answers the purpose of a cement in building, and which would not have answered this purpose, had the lime, sand, and water been mixed together in different proportions, we feel confident that, in what manner soever these constituent elements have been brought together, it must have been done under the direction of some person or persons endowed with intelligence. It is also true, as remarked in the last quotation from the work to which we have referred, that what we call order in our planetary system, is only the series of phenomena which take place according to necessary laws, by which the bodies that compose it are ruled. Had these laws been different, or had the bodies on

which they act been differently arranged, or differently constituted, of course a series of phenomena, different from those that we behold, would have taken place. But, inasmuch as it has been shown, in a popular work written by one of the most eminent mathematicians of the present day\*, that the phenomena which result from the action of these laws on the bodies which compose this system, answer several useful purposes which they would not have answered under another set of laws, or with a different arrangement or constitutions of the bodies, we must suppose the laws, or the constitution and arrangement of the planets to have been the result of the wisdom of some superior intelligence. To take what appears to us to be the most remarkable of the proofs of design exhibited in their present arrangement, it is well known that the stability of the system is due to the fact of the planets having been projected round the sun in the same direction, nearly in the same plane, and in orbits nearly circular, and to the smallness of the mass of those planets whose orbits deviate more from circles, than those of the others whose masses are larger. Mathematicians have shown that the chances are many thousands to one against all these requisite conditions having been fulfilled, if the arrangement of the system had not been under the direction of some de-

\* Dr. Whewell in his *Bridgewater Treatise*.

signing mind. We are sure that there are many other instances of design among those specified by writers on natural theology, in which, if they could be traced through a series of secondary causes to the arrangement and distribution of matter at the beginning of our planetary system, or, if at the beginning of the astral system to which our planetary system is said to belong, the proofs of a designing mind would at least be equally cogent. The sum-total of all these proofs, that is, the combinations of chances against the non-existence of a designing mind, is quite incontrovertible.

We shall conclude these remarks with a few observations about miracles, borrowed in part from Mr. Babbage's *Bridgewater treatise*. That eminent gentleman has very aptly illustrated this subject by referring to his calculating-machine, which he supposes set, so that a wheel turns, exhibiting on its rim certain numbers following one another according to some very simple law; say, for example, in their natural order. This may be supposed to be continued for some time, when, contrary to expectation, the wheel may be made to exhibit some number not following its predecessor, in the same order that the preceding numbers had come, and the numbers which appear afterwards, may follow one another in the same order, as those did which appeared, before this deviation from their



natural order had taken place; or the wheel may afterwards exhibit numbers succeeding one another according to some new law. There are two methods by which this deviation from, or alteration in the first established law may have been effected. The instrument may have been arranged so that this deviation or alteration may take place at a certain time predetermined by the person who had arranged it, or it may be caused by some direct interference on his part. If it be asked which of these two methods of causing this deviation or alteration to take place shows to greatest advantage the skill of the person who works the machine, and the capability of the machine itself, we think that it will at once be replied, "undoubtedly the former."

We may also add that any spectator who saw the machine in operation, and exhibiting certain numbers in the manner supposed, would unhesitatingly allow that the machine must have been constructed and arranged by some intelligent person or persons. If any one were in his presence to make some fresh adjustment of the machine, so as to cause it to exhibit a number deviating from the order of succession hitherto observed, or exhibit a series of numbers following one another according to a different law, the spectator would believe that he understood the construction and the working of the machine, and

would be inclined to credit him, if he asserted that he had been employed and instructed by the maker of the machine. If such a person were to foretell, when an exception to the law previously observed among the numbers should take place, or when the series should commence to follow a different law, this would also be regarded as a proof that he had some knowledge of the maker and the adjuster of the machine; but surely the spectator would not require any interposition of this sort, or any proof of any such interposition having ever taken place, to confirm him in his opinion that the machine must have been originally made and adjusted by some person or persons. And if he were to find reason to believe that some exception to the law of succession which he perceived in the numbers exhibited to him by the machine, had, at some former period, taken place, or that the law which he himself observed to prevail, had not always been followed, he would be more convinced of the skill and power of the persons who had arranged it, if it could be shown that this exception or alteration had taken place in consequence of their original adjustment of the machine, and with their foreknowledge, than if it had been caused by any special interposition on their part. In the same manner, any person who had observed the many and various indications of design that are to be

found in the order and general economy of nature, must ascribe this general order and economy to an intelligent Author of Nature. He would not require that any miracle should be wrought in his presence to confirm him in his belief of this great truth. If any person were to appear in the world who had the power of suspending or altering the laws of nature on particular occasions, or who was able to foretell when they would be suspended or altered, he might be inclined to believe that such a person was an accredited messenger from the Author of Nature; but the miracles wrought by him could be no additional proof of the existence of this great Author of Nature. And if he were to find reason to believe that any suspension or alteration of Nature's laws had at any time taken place, or that the phenomena which he then beheld, were different from those which used to occur at some former period of the history of the universe, he would acknowledge that the power and wisdom of the Author of the Universe were shown to greater advantage, if it should appear that He had caused such apparent deviations from the laws of Nature, or the commencement of a new series of phenomena to take place in virtue of some original plan or system adopted at the commencement of the world, than if he had brought them about by a special exercise of creative power.

Surely these considerations ought to dispel the doubts and scruples of those who may hitherto have thought that religion required them to believe, that the commencement of organic life, in any shape, or of each new species of animals that may at any time have inhabited this globe of ours, must have required a special interposition on the part of the Almighty.

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## CHAPTER III.

### APPLICATION OF THE ARGUMENT, CONTINUED.

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WE now propose to turn our attention specially to the second part of the proposition broached in the "Vestiges of the Natural History of the Creation," namely, that "there is an inherent impulse connected with vital forces, tending in the course of generations to modify organic structures in accordance with external circumstances." And first, concerning this inherent impulse itself, we wish to remark, that if its utility and its beneficial effects are apparent, the fact of its existence must be ascribed to the wisdom and goodness of an all-powerful Creator, as much as that of other things in which his benevolent design is apparent. From observing its universal prevalence, though its power in modifying the forms and constitutions of plants and animals in the present age of the world, is but

small, some have been led to regard it as a necessary self-existent principle, in the same manner as before the discovery of the universal prevalence of the law of gravitation, men were accustomed to look upon the tendency of heavy bodies to fall to the ground. Hence they were led to think that, if the various conformations of organic structures to external circumstances, which by natural theologians have been denominated adaptations, could be shown to be the result of some such principle as this, there was no need to ascribe them to the wisdom and benevolence of a Creator. We are unable to see any reason why this self-adaptive principle should be the self-existing more than the law of gravitation, and if its results can be shown to be as useful and as important in zoology, as those of the latter law are known to be in cosmogeny, it must be allowed to carry the same evidence of having been an emanation from the counsels of an all-wise Creator. It need scarcely be remarked that the wisdom of the author of this inherent impulse will appear still more conspicuous, if it be shown to be the result of some anterior law, or arrangement of the matter out of which the universe was formed.

We shall now proceed to consider some of the "adaptations of the Natural Theologian," so as to enable an impartial judge to determine whether the arguments founded on them are enfeebled by

supposing them to be the result of some adaptive principle, with which the earlier forms of animal life may have been endowed, though, in the mature stage of development in which we behold them, they may be but little affected by it, instead of the effects of special fiat of the creative power.

There is no peculiarity in the human constitution that has appeared to us to show benevolent design on the part of the Author of Nature, more than the extreme sensibility of the skin, compared with the flesh and bones, though we do not know whether we are correct in classing this among what are commonly called adaptations. This sensibility of the skin in man answers a double purpose. It allows him to enjoy all the pleasures arising from the sense of touch, and is, at the same time, most useful in acting as a safeguard to the body against injuries. The clothing him with armour, thick as the hide of a rhinoceros, might in a great measure have debarred him from the former class of enjoyments, while it would not have answered the latter purpose more effectually than the present arrangement. The wisdom of this provision of the Almighty cannot be made more apparent than by considering what would be the consequences, if this order of sensation in the human body were reversed; if the skin were almost void of feeling, and the inner and most vital parts of the body very sensitive of pain.

Man would then have no warning of the injuries with which his body was menaced, until those parts which it was most essential to protect were hurt; the pain would come too late, and could serve no useful purpose, inasmuch as it would only furnish information of the injury that had been inflicted, instead of giving timely warning of approaching danger, as it does now. Surely such an arrangement, in whatever manner it may have been brought about, must have emanated from the counsels of an Allwise Providence. And there is no hypothesis of creation by which His wisdom and His goodness are made more manifest, than one which leads us to ascribe it to some primordial arrangement of the matter, out of which the flesh, bones, and nervous system of man were in the course of time to be produced, by the working of certain fixed laws which He had established. Truly, we should have cause to admire this foresight, and to be grateful to Him for His fatherly care of us, in having made such an excellent provision for our safety and our enjoyment, ere the foundations of the world were laid.

In his discourses about the eye, Paley calls the attention of his readers to the mode in which this organ is adapted to the perception of objects which lie near it, as also of those which are at a considerable distance. He afterwards compares the mechanism by which it is made to rectify itself for



this purpose, to the compensation balance by which a watch is made to regulate itself, to which we have referred several times, and then goes on to say, "shall, therefore, a structure which differs chiefly from Harrison's, by surpassing it, be deemed no contrivance at all; or, if it be deemed a contrivance, shall it be said that it is without a contriver?" But what, if it be shown that this principle of adaptation extends over a much wider range of the kingdom of animated nature than was originally supposed—what, if it be shown that the general plan which, in comparing the eyes of different animals, we observe to be laid down, of making the eye of each animal vary with the different uses to which it is to be applied, is the result of some adaptive constitution in the primitive forms of life. An eye might have been formed of such a nature that its iris should become capable of contraction or elongation, according as the light was too strong for the retina or otherwise, which would consequently make it acquire a more convex form in the inhabitants of the water, than in land animals; or its constitution might have been such that, if required, as in birds, to view very near objects distinctly, as also those placed at a very long distance, it should acquire a flexible rim or hoop to confine the action of its muscles, and elongate its axis, for the purpose of viewing very

near objects, and at the same time be furnished with the marsupium by which the crystalline lens may be drawn back, and the same eye fitted for the perception of objects very distant. Can it be said that this power of adaptation, which, while it was supposed to have been limited to the human eye, it was confessed must have been the workmanship of an intelligent designer, is not so, if shown to have originally extended to all those animals who are endowed with the sense of vision ? This is a case which will bear a comparison with that of instruments, which we supposed to have been endowed with sundry latent apparatus, designed for specific purposes, which might be differently developed and modified in each instrument, according to the various uses to which it might be applied, and the different situations into which it might be brought, while others might, by long disuse, become incapable of being brought into operation. Instruments of this sort surely could not have come into existence by chance ; they bear evident tokens of the design of their maker. All the adaptations which, in the course of time, they would acquire, must be ascribed to the supreme intelligence of him who had made them, an intelligence which would certainly appear greater, than if these instruments had been originally created with different modifications for different purposes. Why, then, should

those who maintain that the adaptations so conspicuous in the eyes of different animals are the result of an inherent impulse in the forms of life to modify or alter their structure in accordance with external circumstances, be accused of propagating a theory which leads to atheism?

The covering of different animals has been cited as being, both for its variety and its suitableness to their different natures, much to be admired, as a proof of the wisdom and benevolence of the Omnipotent Creator. "We have bristles, hair, wools, furs, feathers, quills, prickles, scales; yet in this diversity, both in material and form, we cannot change our animal's coat for another, without evidently changing it for the worse\*." Here, certainly, is a proof of wisdom and benevolence exercised somewhere. But in what mode are we to suppose them to have been exercised? Are we to believe that each animal was created with a clothing ready adapted for the circumstances in which it was placed, or that the great Author of Nature has established some law in animated nature which makes the clothing of all animals correspond with their exigencies and modes of living? This we know to be the case with those animals which are covered with fur. "Every dealer in rabbit-skins and in hare-skins knows how much

\* Paley's "Natural Theology."

“ the fur is thickened on the approach of winter.  
“ It seems to be part of the same constitution and  
“ the same design that wool, in hot countries,  
“ degenerates, as it is called, but in truth (most  
“ happily for the animals’ ease) passes into hair,  
“ whilst, on the contrary, in dogs of the Polar  
“ regions, hair is turned into wool, or something  
“ very like it\*.” We are inclined to think that  
the conformity of the colour of the fur of the hare, an  
animal pursued by others in all countries, with that  
of the earth in temperate regions, and with that of  
snow in Polar regions, which serves to screen it from  
the view of its pursuer, and has always been regarded  
as a proof of the benevolence of an Allwise Provi-  
dence, may be ascribed to some general law of  
nature. This work of nature may very aptly be  
compared, like some of those which we have already  
considered, to the compensation balance of a watch ;  
in the animal as well as in the watch we see design  
as plainly as if different animals had been created  
for different zones, or different watches for different  
temperatures, and we must allow that the former  
mode of acting shows much greater power and fore-  
sight on the part of the designer, than the latter.  
What, then, if the enlargement of our knowledge  
leads us to think that animals have acquired bristles,  
hair, wool, or feathers by some general law of nature,

\* Paley’s “ Natural Theology.”

which makes the clothing of each animal vary according to the external circumstances by which it is affected, such as food, meteoric agencies, and the nature of the habitat? If the results of that law are, that one animal's coat cannot be changed for another, without manifest detriment to the animal itself, do we not clearly see the benevolent design of the Author of Nature, who ordained the law which should bring about such results? For aught we know to the contrary, heat might have caused the hair to grow thicker on the skins of animals; cold might have caused it to drop off; the actions of the different elements might have produced many inconvenient results. Can, then, such a law of nature be ascribed to chance? And is not the power of the Creator made more manifest by His forming such a law, than by His interposing any number of times for any purpose, however beneficent? The greatness and extent of this power would be still more apparent, if it were shown that this law was the result of the primary arrangement of nebulous matter, out of which the universe is said to have been formed. And although we do not wish to weigh the different arguments that may be urged either in favour of, or against the existence of some such law, we may here remark that it is by no means disproved by the assertion that the experience of mankind forbids us to ascribe

this mode of working, great and magnificent as it may appear, to the Author of Nature, inasmuch as there is no record of bristles having been changed through any succession of generations into feathers, or of fins having passed into wings. Organized beings are now beheld in a mature state, and have probably by time and constant use acquired a constitution much less susceptible of modification, than that with which they were originally endowed. It is not easy to alter the shape of a metallic figure which has once acquired a certain form and consistency, though the metal out of which it is composed might have acquired any shape, immediately after it was taken from the melting-pot or the furnace. And in the same manner as a child may be brought up on coarse and scant diet, or may be made accustomed, from his infancy, to refinement and luxury, and may thrive equally well under either mode of living; though in advanced years he cannot, without some risk, change from one of these modes of life to the other, so may the earlier forms of life have been endowed with a power of adapting themselves to circumstances, which cannot be expected in their descendants, whose organs must have become fully developed and matured. Though there is no reason to suppose that the English and Hindoos may not originally have been of the same race, yet a child of English parents cannot be

brought up in India ; the inhabitants of the temperate regions, having in the course of several generations acquired a constitution which makes them unable, in their tender years, to stand the scorching climate of the East. Is there any reason to suppose that this power of adaptation, which we see exists in the present inhabitants of the globe to a certain extent, might not have prevailed in an infinitely greater degree among the earliest generations of living beings ? Or, supposing the development theory to be true, might it not have existed among the first generations that followed each successive development ? We may easily suppose the Author of Nature to have brought into existence animal forms, so constituted that they might acquire an organization suited for the circumstances in which they might at first have been placed, which, when once acquired, though it may be slightly modified, cannot be altogether changed.

We shall find no difficulty in applying this reasoning to the appropriate differences in the intestines of men and beasts. The *valvulæ conniventes* found in the human intestine are wanting in those of brutes. These are wrinkles or plates in the innermost coat of the guts, the effect of which is to retard the progress of food through the alimentary canal. It is easy to understand how much more necessary such a provision must be to the body of

an animal in an erect posture, and in which consequently the weight of the food is added to the action of the intestine, than to that of a quadruped, in which the course of the food from its entrance to its exit is nearly horizontal. This certainly, no matter how it has been caused, is a beneficial contrivance, and is strongly indicative of design. If the human race has come into existence in the manner supposed by the author of the "Vestiges," it is possible that these very *valvulæ conniventes* have tended, among other things, to give to man his present erect posture. There is an observation of Paley's, that he believes that to disagreeable sensations we and all animals owe and have owed many habits of action which are salutary, but which are become so familiar as not to be easily referred to their origin. Now, it is evident that these wrinkles or plates in the intestines might delay the process of digestion, and consequently cause a feeling of nausea in an animal that always carried its body in a horizontal position. Might not a desire to avoid this feeling of nausea have been one among the many causes that concurred to give to certain animals their present erect posture? Or may not these *valvulæ conniventes* be hereafter discovered to have some necessary connexion with, or to be in some way caused by, the peculiar organization or structure of the body of an animal which is carried



in an erect position? Without presuming to offer any opinion on this subject, we would ask—Are we to admire less the wisdom of our Maker, if we discover that He, having from the beginning ordained that the earth should in the course of time be inhabited by beings of an erect posture, gave a constitution to living forms, such that He foresaw would, in the course of time, cause some of them to acquire an organization which should compel them to hold their bodies in an erect position, or that, having, by virtue of some general system of laws, brought into the world animals who carried their bodies upright, He should, by virtue of the same system of laws, cause them to be endowed with a peculiarity so beneficial as the one to which we have alluded, than if he had created an intestine of this sort anew, when animals who hold their bodies in a vertical position, first came into the world? Surely, those who hail with delight any fresh discovery of science that magnifies in their eyes the power of the Creator, would wish to contemplate Him as working by some such general plan. We need hardly remark that, in any hypothesis, chance is out of the question.

There certainly is no branch of knowledge which furnishes us with instances of adaptation more curious or more wonderful, than comparative anatomy, and these adaptations, whatever may have

been their immediate cause, must in the beginning have emanated from the counsels of a designing mind. There is no department of nature in which our conceptions of the power of the Creator would be more exalted, by viewing all these adaptations as the result of some inherent principle implanted in the earliest forms of life, itself perhaps the consequence of some anterior arrangement in the universe; consequently there is none in which we hail with greater satisfaction any argument in favour of their having been caused by some such general law.

“ We may examine the skeletons of animals now in  
“ existence, or the remains of those of extinct races,  
“ which are dug up, and become subjects of enter-  
“ taining inquiry; among other important conclu-  
“ sions, they lead to this, that there is not only a  
“ scheme or system of animal structure pervading all  
“ the classes of animals that now inhabit the earth,  
“ but that the principle of this great plan of creation  
“ was in operation and governed the formation of  
“ those animals which existed previous to the revo-  
“ lutions which the earth has undergone; that  
“ the excellence of the form we now see in the  
“ skeleton of the man was in the scheme of animal  
“ existence long previous to his formation, and before  
“ the surface of the earth was prepared for him, and  
“ suited for his constitution, structure, or capacities.”  
“ In exploring the varieties of animal nature at

“ distinct epochs we acknowledge the manifest design with which all has been accomplished, and the adaptations of the animals, their size, their economy, their organs, and their instruments, to their conditions.” What a field of design is here opened to us, how great, how truly wonderful will it appear, if it be shown that all these adaptations, extending through every epoch and every class of living creatures, are the result of some constitutional tendency implanted in the parent forms of life, which possibly might have been only the lowest order of animals; how great must have been the foresight of Him who has brought such magnificent things to pass by his counsel! Well might the Psalmist have exclaimed, not only of man, the most perfect of all the animals, but of all others who have inhabited the globe at any epoch, “ Before ever they were formed in the womb, thou didst fashion them in the bowels of the earth.”

Perhaps the most wonderful and instructive part of the whole science of comparative anatomy is the process of reasoning, by which, on inspecting a small fragment of a bone we are able to ascertain the shape, motions, and habits of the animal to which it belonged. We have an illustration given to us of the mode, in which, from a small portion of the skeleton we are enabled to ascertain the existence of a vegetable feeder or a carnivorous

animal, a fowl or a bat, a lizard or a fish. It is said that we hardly ever survey anything uncommon in the outward configuration of an animal, but we find something new and appropriate in the interior anatomy, and innumerable instances are given to us of the manner in which the whole system of bones is made to conform to that of the extremities. What evidences we have here of a designing mind ; what a conviction is brought home to us of His power, if it should appear that all these conformities among the bones of the different animals have been caused by one great and comprehensive law ! We think that this latter class of adaptations, namely, the conformity of the anatomy of the interior to the outward configuration, will bear a strict comparison with the case of a sundial, which we supposed constructed so that the inclination of the gnomon and the graduation of the dial should vary with the latitude of the place to which the dial might be transported. Of instruments constructed on this plan it might be said, that there was never any variation in the graduation without an appropriate difference in the axis of the gnomon. It might be thought at first, that different dials had been constructed for different latitudes, and this of course would be deemed a proof of knowledge and foresight on the part of the maker. The discovery of some such apparatus as we have

supposed, by which both the inclination of the gnomon and the graduation of the circumference should be made to vary with the latitude of the place, which it is perfectly possible to conceive, though it may never actually take place, would show wisdom and skill on his part still greater than we had originally supposed; and must not the same thing be allowed of the Author of Nature, if it be discovered that he has endowed all animals with constitutions, such that both the conformation of their outward parts, and the anatomy of their interior should be made to vary according to their habits and exigences, the climate and the circumstance of their geographical position? The same train of reasoning applies to the beautiful examples which we have of the wisdom of the Author of Nature, when we discover the same system of bones in the arm of the mammalia, the fin of the whale, the paddle of the turtle, and the wing of the bird; as also in the paw of the lion or bear, the hoof of the horse, and the foot of the camel, in each admirably fitted for the purpose for which it was intended.

The greater the utility of any adaptation that we are able to perceive in the wide domain of nature, and the more it strikes us as resembling the consequence of an isolated act of creative power, the more we must admire the wisdom and foresight of one who

has been able to bring it about by some general law, or by some general system of laws. There is no peculiarity in the constitution of animals on which theologians have laid more stress than on instinct, there is none to which we think these observations can be better applied. Paley very properly defines instinct to be an inclination to perform certain acts, prior to experience, and independent of instruction. It would be needless to refer specifically to any of the numerous examples of this propensity in the brute creation. Various have been the causes assigned for it by theologians, by natural philosophers, and by sceptics. Des Cartes seemed almost inclined to believe that brutes were altogether devoid of mind, and that by "Nature" acting according to the disposition of their members, they were led to perform certain acts with a degree of nicety to which reason could not have directed them, in the same manner as we see a clock which is only composed of wheels and weights, can measure time better than we with all our skill are able to do. Newton says, that the instinct of brutes and insects can be nothing else but the wisdom and skill of a powerful everliving Agent who, being in all places, is more able by His will to move the bodies within His boundless uniform sensorium, and thereby to form and reform parts of the universe, than we are able by our own will to move parts of our own bodies. Lord Broug-

ham, in his dialogues about instinct, leads us to the conclusion, that it is the mind of the brute that performs the whole operation, which is, as it were, the machine and the instrument, and performs its work with unerring certainty and absolute perfection. He then adds, "The design is manifest, the action " is perfectly and surely adapted to it; must there " not have been a designer? and who can that be but " the Deity?" This certainly does not differ much from Sir Isaac Newton's theory. Again, we have the author of one of the Bridgewater Treatises asserting his opinion, that brutes are led to perform those operations that are commonly called instinctive, by the physical force of some electro-chemical agents under the immediate control of the Deity, whom he supposes to be personified in the Cherubim and Seraphim of the Scriptures. In every one of these theories the design is manifest, and must be ascribed to a designer; and in all, the designer is supposed to be so near at hand, that the most timid theologian will not be afraid to admit the truth of whichever of them his own unprejudiced judgment may lead him to adopt.

Now, we do not think that any person who has well considered the drift of our foregoing discourses will be afraid, on religious grounds, to endeavour to form a clear and impartial judgment respecting any of the theories that ascribe instinct to what are

commonly called natural causes. In the "Vestiges of the Natural History of the Creation," we are told that, what are called instincts in some of the humbler species, that is, uniform and unprompted tendencies towards certain particular acts, such as the building of cells by the bee, the storing of provisions by that insect, and several others, and the construction of nests for a coming progeny by birds, is nothing more than a mode of operation peculiar to the faculties in an humbler state of endowment, or early stage of development. "The cell-formation of the bee, the house-buildings of ants and beavers, the web-spinning of spiders, are but primitive exercises of constructiveness, the faculty which, indefinite with us, leads to the arts of the weaver, upholsterer, architect, and mechanist, and makes us often work delightedly, when our labours are vain, or nearly so. The storing of provisions by bees is an exercise of acquisitiveness, a faculty which with us makes rich men and misers. A vast number of curious devices by which insects provide for the protection and subsistence of their young, whom they are, perhaps, never to see, are most probably restricted efforts of philoprogenitiveness." All acts of this class in brutes are ascribed to faculties of the mind, which are said to differ from those of men, in being definite in their range of action, whereas



the latter are said to be indefinite. The gradual acquirement and the development of mental faculties in different animals is ascribed to the formation and gradual development of the nervous system. Now, though we confess we are unable to see how many of those acts that are commonly called instinctive, can be ascribed to any definite range of mental operation, we shall endeavour to show that, if this be a true explanation of the origin of instinct, it bears the same impress of a designing mind, as if brought about by any of the aforementioned causes. The gradual improvement of the nervous system, and the formation of the brain, which causes this definite manifestation of mental power, is ascribed to an inherent impulse implanted in the first forms of life; the result of those primordial arrangements of matter which were, in the course of time, to bring organic life into existence. Where can we find a specimen of design more wonderful than in this very arrangement of matter, which should, by means of the action of certain laws for a fixed period, bring into existence forms of animal life, so constituted that a nervous system should be gradually formed, improved, and developed in each animal, in such a manner that it should be endowed with an uniform and undeviating tendency to perform certain actions highly beneficial to its species, and in most cases abso-

lutely necessary for the preservation of its own life, and for the protection and subsistence of its young, whom it is, perhaps, never to see; that should cause the solitary wasp to bring to holes, in each of which it has left one of its eggs, a certain number of caterpillars, and there roll up and deposit over the egg in each hole just so many of these as shall be necessary for the subsistence of its young in the next season, while it continues in the grub state, and no more—a species of food, be it remembered, which it does not feed on itself; which should make two sparrows hatched in an oven, and cut off from all communication with the rest of their species, build a nest in precisely the same manner that other sparrows had done before them; or that should make the bee, brought up apart from others, form hexagonal cells like the rest of his tribe? In this, as well as Sir Isaac Newton's and Lord Brougham's theories of instinct, the animals are supposed to be led to perform certain operations entirely through the agencies of their minds which, in the two latter, are supposed to be under the immediate control of the Deity, whereas in the one now under our consideration, they are supposed to have arrived at a certain degree of capability which leads them to do just what is required in each case for their own preservation and the continuation of their species, and

no more, by the development of the nervous system, which has been caused by some primary arrangement of matter subject to certain laws. What wonderful foresight must there have been in Him who at the first arranged the matter subject to His laws, so that, when, by the action of these laws, animals endowed with a nervous system should come into existence, this system should be so developed in the ant, the solitary wasp, and the bee, that each should have attained exactly such a definite degree of acquisitiveness, constructiveness, and philoprogenitiveness, as to induce it to perform these acts to which we have referred, but nothing supernumerary or useless. The preconcerted harmony which is supposed by Leibnitz to exist between impressions on the senses and the corresponding feelings of the mind, does not imply a more wonderful exercise of foresight and design on the part of the maker of the universe, than does this theory of instinct.

Far different from the above, and, as seems to us, far more probable, is the theory of Lamarck. That celebrated naturalist supposes that animals, in order to satisfy their wants, acquire certain habits, which transform themselves into tendencies which they can neither resist nor change. Hence are said to arise the habitual actions and particular inclinations to which the name of instinct has been

given. This tendency of animals to the preservation of their habits and to the repetition of actions which result from them, being once acquired, is propagated among individuals by the channel of reproduction or generation, which preserves the organization or disposition of their parts in their acquired state ; so that this same tendency to certain actions exists in the new individuals of each species even before they have performed them. We have examples of tendencies which we know to have been acquired in this manner in the habit of pointing at game, which dogs of a certain breed have transmitted to them from their progenitors, and in the peculiar leap which is observable in the descendants of Irish horses, who themselves have never been in the country where it was acquired by their sires. The same thing may be observed of the peculiarities of gait and deportment that are often transmitted from parents to their offspring, even in cases where they could not have been acquired by imitation. If, then, as may well be conceived, the first forms of life were of a more docile and plastic nature, than their descendants whose constitutions may be supposed to have become fixed and settled by time and usage, there appears to us to be no valid objection against ascribing to this origin the tendency to a great number at least of those actions that are commonly

called instinctive. If this be the case, we are able to perceive a great and comprehensive plan for instructing and providing for the brute creation, namely, that the first individuals of each species being of a peculiar docile and plastic nature, should be induced by external circumstances to perform the actions necessary for the maintaining of their lives, and the continuation of their species; and that a tendency to perform necessary and salutary acts arising in them from habit, should be transmitted by generation to posterity. This cannot be the result of chance; it cannot be said to be the result of any necessary constitution in the nature of things which does not spring from design. Any inherent constitution in the nature of things which produces results so beneficial would furnish us with as cogent proofs of the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Author of Nature, as any series of special interpositions.

We need hardly add, that the same reasoning with respect to a designer applies, if it should appear that the tendency to perform this class of actions that are now under our consideration may be ascribed to several of the causes referred to above. It may be that a definite degree of reasoning power, along with the force of habit transmitted through generations, aided by some chemical influences of nature, all concur in causing the bee, the solitary

wasp, and the ant to accomplish those works that have excited the admiration and wonder of all students of zoology. Or each of these causes may act alone and unaided in separate cases, in exciting the brute creation to perform one or more of the operations of instinct. Under any supposition, the origin of this tendency to certain acts must be ascribed to the provident wisdom of a designing mind.

The same remarks may be applied to the origin of many of the affections which conduce to the well-being of society. The feeling of attachment to property, which is the source of so much of the industry and so much of the happiness of the human race; the feeling of sympathy and compassion for the misfortunes of others, by which so much of the miseries incident to this transitory existence are relieved; the ties of domestic affection, which are a very great source of enjoyment to many; the happiness which men endowed with virtue and benevolence derive from the exercise of these qualities; and the tendency of vice and self-indulgence to make man miserable, are clear indications of benevolent design on the part of the Maker of the human race. We do not wish at present to inquire into the origin of these affections; we merely wish to observe, that the same indications of design are conspicuous, whether the human mind in which

these affections reign, was given to man by an immediate interposition of the power of the Almighty; or whether his physical constitution, his sensation, disposition, and intellect are formed, developed, and sustained in action by some great and comprehensive law. If the latter hypothesis be true, how great must have been the wisdom, foresight, and benevolence of the great Author of Nature, who, when in the beginning He made a disposition of matter such that it should in time bring into existence that wondrous creature, Man, should also have made such a beneficent provision for endowing him with qualities by which the welfare and happiness of his race should be so much promoted.

We shall conclude these observations with a few words concerning that master-faculty of the human mind, conscience. The fact of the existence of this faculty, or sense, call it what you will, cannot be denied, neither do we think that its supremacy to all others will be disallowed, nor that its utility as a guide through life be disputed. There have been various differences of opinion among moralists, which probably never will be settled, as to whether it is to be regarded as an original faculty of the human mind, or a secondary one arising from reason, judgment, association. Now, it has been clearly shown by a most learned theologian, the author of one of the Bridgewater Treatises,

that, whether it be a simple faculty of the human mind, and immediately given to man by his Maker, or whether it has arisen from other faculties, the design and benevolent intention of the Creator are equally manifest. For, to recur once more to the mechanical illustration of our subject, any person who perceived and understood the use of the regulator of a watch would, without any hesitation, ascribe it to the design of a maker, whether it had been actually placed in the watch by his hands, or formed by some mechanism in the interior; in the latter case he might well conceive the genius of the maker to be of a very superior order, and might also think that the same machinery which had formed the regulator, the use of which was so apparent, might be part of some more extended system, and might be subservient to other purposes. And, as the inference with respect to a designer holds equally good when applied to a watch, if we suppose the apparatus for making regulators in its interior, as well as the other parts of the watch to have been made by machinery, and to have been gradually brought into use and operation by circumstances, the observations that have been already made concerning conscience will likewise hold good, if we suppose those faculties of the human mind which are thought by some to give rise to that of conscience to have been gradually formed and



improved by development, time and circumstances affecting it in accordance with some great and comprehensive law. In all cases the proper office and the supremacy of conscience must be felt and acknowledged; there are the same evidences of design; the benevolent intentions of the designer must be manifest.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### ON NECESSITY AS INFLUENCING THE ACTIONS OF MEN.

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THE admission of the hypothesis, that men have been formed by certain combinations of matter produced by the action of certain fixed laws, such as the law of gravitation, and that of successive development for a series of years on what was nebulous matter, before it had been subjected to their influence, may seem to many to confirm the doctrines of fatalism and necessity, as applied to the actions of men; and though we have no wish to enter into the labyrinth of metaphysical discussions to which these subjects have given rise, we may well be excused if we devote a short space to consider how far the recent discoveries of science have strengthened the arguments formerly used in support of these doctrines, and how far they should

influence us in our endeavours to regulate our conduct in this transitory world. It is boldly asserted by a certain class of speculators, that what is commonly called mind is merely the result of a subtle combination of matter; that mind, like matter, must be subject to laws, as fixed, as immutable, and as constant, as that of gravitation itself; in short, that men are merely pieces of clock-work, and that if the constitution and mental disposition of each mortal, or rather the combination of matter which produced his constitution and mental disposition, could be accurately known at the time of his birth, as well as all the external circumstances which would afterwards affect him, his subsequent career and conduct through life might be calculated with as much accuracy as the path of a body projected round a centre of attraction, with a given velocity, and acted on by a large number of disturbing forces of known intensities and known laws; that, although a problem of this sort would be too complex, when applied to the case of any individual man, for any person of finite capacity to solve, whence arises a certain appearance of a range of action and semblance of liberty, yet it would present no difficulty to a mind of infinite power, and that, therefore, the course of any individual is as clearly fixed at the time of his birth, and is as certainly the consequence of the circum-

stances in which he is then placed, and of the laws which have been established by Nature, as the orbit of any planet projected round a central force, and acted on by the disturbing forces of any number of bodies revolving round the same centre. It certainly is true that the hypothesis of successive development may seem to corroborate this opinion, and to disprove the existence of the liberty of man, and his responsibility as a moral agent. Now, whether the hypothesis of successive development be true or not, we think that there is one very simple, but very certain method of proving the fallacy of these doctrines, namely, by appealing to the experience of every man. We all know that we certainly are free to act as we think proper, we are able to think and reason for ourselves, and we smile at the folly of those who allow their notions of fatalism to influence them in the management of their temporal affairs. Every man's experience must tell him that his own life is *not* "like a line " which Nature orders him to describe at the " surface of the earth, without being able, for " one instant, to deviate from it\*." This appeal to experience, these feelings of which we are all conscious, appear to us to afford an argument in favour of the liberty of man which is incapable of refutation. In our dealings with our fellow-creatures,

\* " *Système de la Nature.*"

we are obliged to act upon the supposition that all are free. All criminal jurisprudence presupposes the freedom of man. In determining the punishments that are to be inflicted on the perpetrators of crimes of all descriptions, the law makes exceptions in favour of those who can show that in consequence of any mental derangement they were not free agents, at the time of their having committed the crime which may have been proved against them, which shows that there are states different from the ordinary condition of man, in which he is *not* master of his own actions, which however, are only casual, and not general. What should we think of a boy who deprecated being punished for any fault that he had committed, by saying that he was not free? We are aware that attempts have been made by the author of the "*Système de la Nature*," by Hartley, and by others, to account mechanically and physically for the formation of the judgments on which the will depends. But how very vague, how very uncertain, are their speculations on this subject. It must be allowed that there is much in psychological science, and in all attempts to explain the nature of the mind "of that sentient principle, " thing, or being, which we call *I* and *we*, and " which thinks, feels, and reasons," which appears to be placed beyond the range of human investi-

gation. And we are quite content to leave the whole question of the liberty of man as one of opposite improbabilities. "Is it more likely that men, in making the speculations to which we have referred, should have fallen into error, or that our own senses are deceiving us?" Those who fear, lest the discoveries of science should confirm the doctrines of fatalism and materialism, must also recollect that there are many traits in the constitution of man which are, at least, as difficult to reconcile with the hypothesis of successive development, as the fact of his being a free and responsible agent. It may seem difficult to believe that beings brought into the world in the manner that this hypothesis supposes men to have originated, can have all the qualities and sensations which they certainly have. All men are conscious of the feelings of individuality and personality; they are all affected by the sensations of fear, doubt, and hope. They have most of them notions, no matter how acquired, of virtue and of vice, of honour and dishonour, of justice and injustice, in the relations between themselves; they fully admit the responsibility of individuals in certain situations, and the merits and demerits of their behaviour; they are all endowed with reasoning powers to a certain extent, and some possess them to a most astonishing degree; they have made discoveries in science,

which might at first appear to have been placed quite beyond the reach of human faculties. The works of Newton, La Place, Cuvier, and the author of "Vestiges of the Natural History of the Creation," show what the reason of man is capable of, and exalt our conceptions of the dignity of human nature. Surely, then, it is impossible that such beings can be merely exquisitely organized lumps of clay, mere machines or pieces of clock-work, brought on the stage of existence and moved about thereon by laws fixed and immutable, like the figures of a puppet-show, who are forced to perform their evolutions by an exquisitely constructed system of wires. It is not more difficult to explain the origin of all these faculties of the human mind, on the development theory, than to account (on the same theory) for the liberty of man, which seems inseparably allied with them. The origin of the phenomenon of life itself seems as incapable to be explained, and as hard to be understood as any. "The transition from an inanimate chrysalis to a globule capable of endless organic and intellectual development is as great a step, as unexplained a one, and in every sense of the word as miraculous," as would be the endowment of a being, so formed, with free will and liberty of judgment. And if it be asserted that all these feelings, sensations, reasoning powers, and the

consciousness of liberty to which we have alluded are mere deceptions, mere illusions of the fancy, the natural consequence of the material organization of the brain, being subject to certain influences from without; and that what is called knowledge is merely a juxta-position, or an affinity, of certain of these illusions, or affections of the brain, termed ideas, we reply that, upon this supposition, we cannot argue or discourse upon any subject whatever. For if this be true, all discoveries of science of times past and present, those of the author of the "Vestiges" included, are mere deceptions or illusions of the brain, and there is no more truth or certainty in any branch of human knowledge, than in the dreams of a sick man or the visions of a maniac. But if the maintainers of the development theory allow, as we think they must, that there is something in this that they cannot explain, then they will have no difficulty in admitting that beings brought into existence in the mode suggested in their hypothesis, may be free and responsible agents, placed in this world in a state of probation, to be rewarded or punished hereafter according to their conduct in this life.

With regard to the immateriality of the soul.— We are far from wishing to enter into any abstruse speculations concerning the nature of mind or spirit, or to review the disputes or dissertations



written by others on the subject, but we would ask any candid inquirer, if, even supposing the hypothesis of successive development to be proved beyond all doubt, there is anything in it which forbids us to believe that, however the body of man may have been formed, he may have imparted to him something of a totally different nature from his material organization. That mind can have such an independent existence is evident from the many proofs of design with which the universe abounds, which must be referred to the wisdom of a designing mind which must have existed prior to any of the organizations which it created. This must be acknowledged by the author of the "Vestiges," who, throughout his dissertations, expresses his conviction that the whole system of the universe must have been the work of an omnipotent Creator. The fact that we are incapable of perceiving mind, or of being aware of its presence, except when it is connected with a material organization, by no means disproves the possibility of its existence without it. We know that, as we descend in the scale of animated nature, we find living beings that are not endowed with the sense of hearing, who, of course, can form no idea of sounds; others without the power of seeing, who, of course, can have no idea of light or colours; and as we get lower, we find others in whom the traces of a nervous system almost, if not

entirely, disappear, and who can have but little idea of the existence of any extrinsic object, and certainly can form no conception of the influences of heat or cold, or many such agencies. May there not then be some sense which, though now wanting in us, may hereafter be imparted to us, possessed by beings of a higher nature than ourselves, by which they are enabled to discern the independent existence of mind, and the mode in which it operates through the medium of matter, of the same nature as that by which Paley supposes we may in a future state be able to perceive and be conscious of the existence and actual presence of the Deity? For aught that has been shown in the work to which we have referred, or indeed for aught that can be shown to the contrary, it may be a part of the divine plan to impart something of the nature of mind or spirit to beings that come into existence by the law of successive development, as soon as, by virtue of that law, they may have attained an organization capable of receiving it. There are several ways in which this might be supposed to take place. For instance, Lamarck, in his hypothesis of the formation of the nervous system, supposes that certain invisible and incontenable fluids acquire a certain modification in the bodies of animals whose organization is tolerably advanced, and then become contenable. If this be the case, why should it be

deemed impossible that something of the nature that spirit is commonly supposed to be, should acquire a certain modification, and become contenable in the organization of man?

The above considerations appear to us to be quite satisfactory, as disposing of the question of necessity as influencing the actions of men, as far as it seems to be supported by the theory of successive development. However, as the understandings of mankind have been at all ages much perplexed by disputes concerning free-will and fatalism, the existence of the former of which many well-wishers to religion have found difficult to reconcile with the prescience of the Almighty, and as the author of "Vestiges" and others have referred to several facts, such as the regularity of the statistics of crime and immorality under the same circumstances in certain nations, the manner in which the character of man is affected by the phrenological development of his head, the hereditary transmission of temperament and dispositions, and many others, all of which seem to confirm the latter doctrine, we are unwilling to dismiss the subject, without reviewing the arguments by which the liberty of man has been attempted to be disproved at various times, independent of and prior to the promulgation of the hypothesis above-mentioned.

The arguments that have generally been used by the fatalists, and on which they seem to have chiefly relied, are the following:— In reasoning on the state of things which they observe actually to prevail in this world, they call the attention of philosophers to the hereditary transmissions of temperament and character, which indeed are so notorious that many men may be said to live again in their children. The same peculiarities, the same habits, frequently it would seem an irresistible tendency to the same vices, are often seen, in spite of the most counteracting circumstances, even in those children who have never lived in the society of their parents, and who, therefore, cannot be supposed to have acquired them by imitation, appearing indeed to be imparted to them much in the same manner that, in the lower animals, Lamarck supposes the tendencies to certain actions, commonly called instincts, to be transmitted. The identical intonations of the voice, the same peculiarities of gesture, deportment, and locomotion by which any individual has been distinguished, often reappear in his posthumous child. The children of the most depraved are often at their birth removed from the contagion of the parents' society; they may have all the advantages of a moral and religious education; they may be placed in situations in which they may never be allured by

example, nor stimulated by want, to the commission of the vices and irregularities of which their forefathers had been guilty; they may be opposed in their evil inclinations by the all-powerful voice of public opinion. It too often happens that, as soon as they have become their own masters, they are addicted to the same species of profligacy and sensuality, they fall into precisely the same errors, they perpetrate crimes of the identical description as those for which their sires had been notorious. The hereditary tendencies to the same crime, that of theft for instance, have been remarked in different members of the same family, whose characters were in other respects unblemished, and who were in a class of society in which all such acts were strongly condemned. Moreover, if in addition to these hereditary transmissions which are acknowledged to have such power in forming the character, we take into consideration the nature and the amount of the education each individual receives, the society into which he is thrown, and the temptations to which he is exposed, it would certainly appear that the whole course of his life is laid out for him, at the time that he comes into the world; and that, therefore, he cannot be responsible for his actions to a Being, by whose laws he must have been endowed with those hereditary transmissions which constitute his character, and placed in those circumstances which

influence his conduct. For instance, the son of a bandit, who by the laws of nature inherits his father's ferocious disposition and evil tendencies, is born and reared among a society of robbers and murderers,—can he fail to tread in the footsteps of his sire? A young man of strong passions, born to wealth and title, is left master of his own actions at an early age; he is in possession of all those things, the seeking after which is such a wholesome stimulus to exertion in the majority of mortals; he is thrown into the world with those scanty notions of religion and morality that young patricians usually acquire at our public schools,—is he not certain to be dissipated? Is not the former as clearly predestined to lead a life of vice and crime, as the latter is to enter on a career of fashionable dissipation and immorality? Indeed, some endeavour to give to these arguments a sort of mathematical precision, and seek to establish the doctrine they are meant to support by the same sort of inductive reasoning, as that by which the first law of motion is proved. Arguing from the degree in which the conduct of a mortal is by all allowed to be influenced by his innate disposition and extraneous events, they infer that these, if they were thoroughly known, would be quite sufficient to account for all his thoughts and actions through life. Great stress is laid on the uniformity of action

among a given large number of individuals in the same circumstances. It is said that man is to be seen as an enigma only as an individual; that in the mass he is a mathematical problem. That though it would be as impossible for one mortal to predict the fate of another, from want of knowledge of sufficient data to go upon, as it would be for him to foretel the position of any card in a pack that is dealt out in a game of chance; nevertheless, the career of an individual through life is as much the result of law, as is the position of the card. But that, though it cannot be predicted at whist that one of the players will have a given card at any particular deal, yet it is almost certain that he will hold the card a certain number of times in a given large number of deals. So, also, while it is absolutely impossible to "predict of any Frenchman that, " during the next year, he will commit a crime, it " is certain that about one in every six hundred " and fifty of the French people will do so, because, " in past years, the proportion has generally been " about that amount; the tendencies to crime, in " relation to temptation, being everywhere inva- " riable over a sufficiently wide range of time." It has been said " that in a cloud of dust raised by " the impetuosity of a whirlwind, how confused " soever to our eyes it may appear, or in the most " frightful tempests excited by conflicting winds,

“ which raise the sea, there is not a single particle  
“ of dust or of water which is placed at hazard,  
“ without a cause for occupying the place in which  
“ it is at any moment to be found, which acts  
“ exactly in the manner in which it is obliged ; so  
“ in the terrible convulsions which sometimes  
“ agitate political societies, and which often cause  
“ the overthrow of an empire, there is not a single  
“ action, a single word, a single thought, a single  
“ wish, a single passion, in the agents which join  
“ in bringing about the revolution, as destroyers  
“ or as victims, which is not necessary, which does  
“ not act as it is obliged to act, which does not  
“ infallibly cause the effects it must cause, accord-  
“ ing to the place which those agents occupy in the  
“ moral whirlwind. That, as in the former, a  
“ mathematician, who knew exactly the different  
“ acting forces, and the nature of the particles on  
“ which they acted, could tell exactly how each  
“ particle must move ; so in the latter everything  
“ might be foreseen by a being who was in a  
“ position to know and to appreciate all the actions  
“ and reactions of the minds and of the *bodies* of  
“ those who were contributing to this revolution\*.”  
Many have found it difficult to reconcile the  
idea of future punishment with the prescience  
and the justice of the Almighty. An omni-

\* *Système de la Nature.*



potent Being, say they, has created men, either by his own immediate agency or by the working of a system, every consequence and every result of which He must have foreseen ; He has endowed them with certain appetites, passions, and desires, as also with a certain degree of self-control and of weakness ; if He then places them in certain positions, in which He forbids them to gratify those passions and desires, though they may have the strongest possible temptation to do so, must not He, who is omniscient, clearly foresee that some individuals in whose constitutions he has implanted but little strength of character or power of self-control will not withstand the temptations by which they are assailed ? For this reason, the tradition that has been handed down to us of the fall of our first parents is thought to impugn either the justice or the benevolence of the Almighty ; inasmuch as He must have foreseen that the power of self-government and self-control with which he had endowed them was not sufficient to enable them to overcome the temptations with which He had permitted them to be tried. Is it then credible that the Almighty, to whom we are wont to ascribe the moral attribute of justice, will punish man, the creature of his own making, for having committed an act which He clearly foresaw that one of his character and disposition would, under certain

circumstances in which He had placed him, commit, and from which He might have saved him, by having implanted in him more self-control, milder passions, or by having assigned to him a different position ?

We have here, at the risk of incurring the accusation of prolixity and tautology, stated the arguments that have been urged in support of the doctrine of necessity, and which some irreligionists have deemed almost unanswerable, that we may be better enabled to examine them in detail, and consider how far they should influence our belief in natural religion, and that attention to our conduct in this life which such a belief must necessarily entail upon us ; for we wish it to be premised that we do not wish to discuss this question, except as it affects these subjects. We believe that we have not omitted or modified any of the arguments on which irreligionists have been wont to rely, we certainly have not done so intentionally ; possibly, though we merely wished to state the arguments, we may have appeared to some to have advocated the opinions of the fatalists. We have neither read nor heard anything on this subject which can in any way weaken our belief in natural religion, or our sense of the obligation of the duties which it appears to us to impose upon mankind. We will even go further than this ; we have no hesitation in stating, that the revela-

tions, which we deem to be authentic, have afforded us light on many subjects which might otherwise have appeared difficult, and hard to be understood.

The species of inductive reasoning by which it is attempted to establish the doctrine of necessity like a mathematical truth, is worthy of attention. It has great appearance of plausibility, and is calculated to mislead many. From the known and acknowledged effects which circumstances have upon the conduct of men in general, it is inferred that, if the circumstances and the character of any one individual were thoroughly known, they would be sufficient entirely to account for his conduct on all occasions; and the consequences that seem to result from this doctrine, namely, that no human being has any scope for the exercise of his judgment, deliberation, or choice in determining his own actions, are strongly insisted upon. We fully admit the power of circumstances and character over the actions of an individual, and it is not incumbent upon us to investigate the degree to which this power extends, it is merely with the latter part of this doctrine that we have to do. We think that we are enabled to demonstrate its fallacy by a very simple comparison. The rate of going of a time-piece depends very much on the internal mechanism of the instrument itself, and

the position in which it is placed ; a greater or less degree of perfection may have been attained in the construction of its works, and all such instruments are more or less affected by changes in the temperature, by the moistness or humidity of the surrounding atmosphere, and other circumstances over which possibly their owners have no control. A person who was not acquainted with every part of the mechanism of the instrument, might perchance say that, if it were all thoroughly known to him, along with the state of the barometer, thermometer, and other external influences, he could always tell whether it would go correctly, or how much it would gain or lose, and that the owner of the instrument had no power in regulating its rate of going. Yet surely this conclusion, false as it is, rests upon data at least as plausible, as those upon which that part of the doctrine of fatalism to which we have referred depends. In like manner a philosopher who saw a ship for the first time in his life, and beheld it driven about by the waves and the wind, might say that, if he knew the size and dimensions of the vessel, the shape and position of the sails, and the force and direction of the wind, he could foretell its course exactly, and he might further support his conclusions by some such considerations as these. That, although from the want of the means of ascertaining all the necessary

data, and the attendant circumstances, with sufficient accuracy, the fortune of any one ship may appear an enigma, yet the fortunes of a number of ships might be viewed as a mathematical problem; that, although it is quite impossible to predict that any one ship will be lost in a certain year, yet a certain proportion of all the ships that go to sea in any one year will almost certainly be lost, because it has been so in all past years; that the truth of this principle has been so universally acknowledged that insurance companies have been established, who are able to make a certain profit by receiving from a large number of ships a per-centage on the declared value of each, which value they give to the owners in the event of its being lost. How erroneous would be this impression, even supported by such arguments as the above, which took no account of the power of the rudder over the vessel, the wishes of the pilot, or the attention or skill displayed by him in its management. It is clear that the proposal that was lately made to establish in London a society for insuring the integrity of clerks, collectors, and all such functionaries as are usually obliged to find security for money passing through their hands in the course of business, and the principle that may appear to be thus established, namely, that among a given large number of persons of good character there will be within a

considerable space of time a determinate number of instances in which moral principle and the terror of the consequences of guilt will be overcome by temptations of a determinate kind and amount, does not disprove the existence of free will or diminish the responsibility of man, any more than the establishment of companies for the insurance against loss by sea can sanction the idea that pilots and captains have no power in directing the courses of the vessels committed to their care, or that they are not responsible for the manner in which they discharge their duties. We believe that, not very long ago, when the public mind had been much excited by the numerous casualties which had occurred on railways, it was said by the directors and other interested parties that, of the numerous passengers who availed themselves of this mode of conveyance, some must meet with accidents, and that these were fewer in proportion to the number of travellers, than the casualties that had occurred to stage-coach passengers ; and that the public indignation, so far from being allayed, was rather increased by their adoption of this line of defence. Certainly these considerations did not prevent the most searching investigation being made into the conduct of those to whose incapacity or negligence these accidents were attributed, nor did they in any way assist to screen them from disgrace and punishment, when

merited. And do men think that similar excuses will serve to screen them in the next world from the consequences of their misconduct in this? A railway engineer who would urge excuses of this sort, in defence of his misconduct or negligence, would not appear more unreasonable, than the man who would attempt to excuse himself to his Maker for the misuse of the talents here committed to him, by pointing out the regularity of the statistics of vice and crime, and inferring therefrom that his whole conduct had been ruled by law.

These considerations will also show us how the physical arguments, if we may use the expression, in favour of fatalism, founded on the supposed dependence of the character and disposition on the phrenological development of the head, and the transmission of certain qualities from parents to children may be answered. Their fallacy may be shown by comparisons of the same nature as those we have already made use of. Some ships are better adapted for fast and expeditious sailing than others; some are better fitted to brave the wind and the waves when excited by a hurricane; and some may be deemed generally more safe and sea-worthy than others. In some, the greatest attention may be required on the part of the pilot or captain to prevent a leak being sprung, or to save the vessel from foundering, in consequence of one that has been

sprung already. In the best, as well as the worst and most clumsily built vessels, the skill and care of the pilot may be shown; in the former in turning the good points to the greatest advantage, in the latter in overcoming the difficulties with which he is embarrassed. A still greater responsibility would devolve upon a pilot, if the vessel committed to his charge was such, that, by good management on his part, her natural advantages might be improved, and her disadvantages very much got over, while the contrary effect would be caused by mismanagement. Thus it is with men; in some the affections of benevolence or veneration, whether they proceed from the development of the brain or not, may be predominant; others may be remarkable for the qualities that are commonly supposed to be indicated by the bumps of sensuality and destructiveness; or they may have violent tempers and tendencies to certain vices, very much resembling the instincts of the lower animals, transmitted to them from their parents. But all have it in their power to strive to make the most of their good qualities, and to fight against and to endeavour to overcome the bad. However strong the passions of some may be, it has never been shown that they are quite irresistible, or that they deprive them of all freedom of action, for the hereditary inclination to certain crimes and vices, such as the innate



propensity to telling lies observable in some nations, alluded to in the " Vestiges," or those remarkable hereditary tendencies to theft, mentioned in Dr. Millingen's interesting work on Mind and Matter, cannot be deemed impossible to be overcome. Though we acknowledge the existence of innate passions and evil tendencies, yet we do not impugn the justice of our laws, because they take no account of these in the punishments to which they make men amenable for different crimes. We have never heard of a judge being found fault with for not mitigating the punishment of a convicted criminal, because he was a man of violent passions, or endowed with a hereditary tendency to the crimes of which he had been found guilty, or because the bumps of acquisitiveness or destructiveness, or others which are commonly supposed to indicate the existence of evil or mischievous inclinations, were strongly developed in his head. It is, moreover, an acknowledged fact, that constitutional tendencies may be considerably modified, if not totally changed by care and attention. Even in the science of phrenology, it is allowed that education, mode of life, and devotion to any particular study, affect the development of the skull; that certain bumps increase by the exercise of those functions of the mind they are said to denote, for instance, that those of abstraction and number are made larger by the study of mathematics; and that

others that may have been originally well developed, diminish, if the talents which they are supposed to indicate, are suffered to lie dormant from want of practice.

After these considerations we hope that nobody will be inclined to deny a certain degree of liberty to some men, from an assertion of Dr. Lawrence's, that there are nations the formation of whose heads indicates such a want of the higher powers of the understanding, that he fears that all efforts to make them receive or appreciate the sublime truths of Christianity will be unavailing. It surely will not be asserted that there are any set of men so little endowed with reasoning powers, or so near akin to the lower animals of the creation, as to be incapable of understanding any difference between good and evil ; of perceiving the merit of some actions and the demerit of others ; in short, so constituted, that their lives cannot be looked upon as designed to be states of probation. And be it recollected that even the most determined materialists allow that this very conformation of the skull which is thought to present such an insuperable obstacle against their understanding those revelations which we deem to be authentic, will be considerably altered by continued efforts to improve their condition, to civilize them, to instruct them, to impart to them the sublime truths and wholesome doctrines of the

Christian religion. It may be granted that these nations are placed in a lower state of probation than others; that the same degree of merit or demerit may not be attached to their actions, as to those of men whose understandings have been formed, and whose reasoning powers have been improved by instruction and religion; that they may be as the servants to whom but one talent is committed, while others may be as those who have the higher responsibility of having ten talents entrusted to their charge. Nations, as well as individuals, may have inherited evil customs and depraved constitutions from their ancestors; the faults of the parents may be visited on the descendants through several generations, by their being placed in a less favourable state of probation; but it surely does not follow that such have no degree of freedom, or that their characters are incapable of being tried, or improved by a probationary state.

A simile of the same nature, as those we have already made use of, will expose the absurdity of the very illogical attempt made to show that the doctrine of necessity, as far as man is concerned, follows, as a matter of course, from Locke's theory of the mind having no innate ideas. A sailing-vessel has no power of motion in itself; without wind neither the captain nor the pilot can move

it one foot nearer to the place where they wish to go ; but can they do nothing in modifying or directing the motions caused by the wind ? Through their influence sailing-vessels can cross the Atlantic in opposite directions at one and the same time ; yet the conclusion that, as the motion was caused entirely by the wind, no inmate in the vessel had any power in directing its course, would be as well founded, as the one to which we have alluded. Indeed, we think that the fallacy of this, as of all the reasonings in the chapter in the “ *Système de la Nature*,” concerning the liberty of man, cannot be better shown, than by an assertion made therein, which certainly seems to follow from them, and which every man’s sense and experience will show him is a *reductio ad absurdum*. “ In order that “ man should be free, all things should lose their “ essences for him, he should no longer be endowed “ with physical sensibility, he must have no knowledge of either good or evil, pleasure or grief.” As well might it be said that, in order that a pilot should have any power to guide a ship, neither wind, tide, nor current should have any influence on it whatever. Whatever inferences a love of speculation may lead us to make concerning the mechanism of the human mind, it can never make us believe that an individual has less power to regulate or to control his own actions, than the owner of a watch

has to adjust its going by means of the regulator, or than the steerer of a ship, or the stokesman of a steam-engine have to regulate the motion in their respective departments. And, surely, it is not more contrary to reason and justice to suppose that man may be responsible for the mechanism committed to his care by his Maker, *i. e.* for his own actions, than that these functionaries should be held accountable for the piloting of the ship, or the conducting of the steam-engine. And, as these pieces of mechanism which we have introduced here for the sake of illustrating our subject may, by the neglect and mismanagement of those to whose care they have been committed, get into a state of disorder and derangement, so great that no subsequent care or skill on their part can avail to make them perform their functions with regularity, or reach their destinations in safety, so may it be with the apparatus of man. The former are as deserving of blame for any accident that may occur from derangement and disorder so caused, as if it had been immediately occasioned by any fault of theirs at the time; and man may with equal justice be held accountable for having got himself into such a depraved state that, to make use of popular language, he cannot help sinning.

A very little judgment and experience suffices to make men aware of the situations into which they

cannot with safety bring the instruments committed to their care, and of the trials to which they must not expose them. The owner of a watch soon learns that it will be spoiled, if he lets it fall into the water; that there are certain degrees of heat and cold that will derange the regularity of its movements; that it is liable to be injured, if worn by him while engaged in violent gymnastic exercises: if he through carelessness spoils his watch in any such manner, it will certainly be his own fault, and, to use a common expression, nobody will pity him. A captain or steerer of a ship is held reprehensible for the loss of a vessel which he through heedlessness or foolhardiness has brought into a perilous situation, though he may have spared no skill in his endeavours to save her, after the danger which was the consequence of his own rashness had been incurred. For such a one it would be no excuse to say that he thought she would have been borne safely through, as it is justly held to be the duty of every captain or pilot to know with certainty the capability of his vessel, and on no account to run her rashly into danger for the purpose of showing off her capability, or of making an exhibition of his own skill. Yet some men think themselves hardly dealt with, when threats of punishment are held over them for sinning, when overcome by temptation which they knowingly incurred, or which

they might have avoided. Thus, in the upper classes of society, we frequently behold a man, full of virtuous resolves and pious intentions, join the trifling gaieties, frivolities, and what he may deem the innocent amusement of the order in which his lot has been cast; he may wish to avoid the grosser immoralities and dissipations which he has hitherto been taught to regard as vices; by degrees he is led on by the contaminating effects of example, and by the intoxication of society, to practices of which in his calmer and more reflecting moments he is ashamed. Surely, if experience has taught him that there are situations pregnant with temptations to evil which he cannot withstand, he may be held culpable, if, by placing himself in the same circumstances again, he is led to the commission of an act which his conscience condemns. Indeed, the whole character and constitution of human nature seems to be such, that those who would become virtuous must do so rather by avoiding all occasions of evil, and by bestowing a strict attention on and diligently taking heed to their conversations in the common occurrences of life, than by any power they have of resisting their passions in the hour of temptation.

The revelations which we deem to be authentic fully confirm the view we have here taken of the means of becoming virtuous. The Scriptures abound

with precepts and admonitions, exhorting Christians to avoid placing themselves in circumstances which may induce them to err. The founder of our religion has commanded his followers to watch and pray, lest they enter into temptation. The words of our Saviour, "What king going to make war against another king sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether with ten thousand he is able to meet him that cometh with twenty thousand," contain a significant exhortation to men to beware how they rush heedlessly into temptations which may be too great for their powers to withstand. The command, "If thy right eye offend thee pluck it out; it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire," does not so much enjoin men to renounce their besetting sins, for these would never be compared to the right eye, as to avoid all pursuits and modes of living, however agreeable they may be, or however necessary they may seem, which may lead them to the commission of vice or immorality. The simple exhortation of St. James, "Avoid the Devil, and he will flee from thee," shows the easiest method of becoming virtuous.

As habit has such power in forming the character and guiding the conduct, that every single instance of a man's yielding to the allurements of vice may be considered as weakening his moral principle, which,



on the other hand, is strengthened by continual perseverance in the paths of virtue, it follows that the running into temptation which might have been avoided, may cause a man to commit a series of vicious actions, and may end in the total ruin of his moral character, while his steadfastly avoiding every inducement to evil may keep him continually in the path of virtue, greatly strengthen his power of self-control, which might at first have been weak and incapable of resistance, and enable him to overcome those temptations by which, without any rashness or any negligence on his part, he may be assailed. Human nature is such that all men appear to act more from habit, than from reflection. This constitution appears to be peculiarly well adapted for the circumstances of the world, which often require persons to act on emergencies which do not allow time for deliberation or reasoning. For this cause, those who are desirous of leading a virtuous life should take diligent heed of their actions and conversations, even in those minor and apparently unimportant occasions in which they seem little likely to be productive of either good or evil consequences, especially as on these periods they are more guided by reason and less swayed by passion than at other times. By duly attending to the laws of habit which appear to be inseparable from the mechanism of the human constitution,

and by carefully avoiding all temptations to evil, in which either reason or experience teaches them that they may be overcome, men may exercise a powerful influence over their future destinies and careers, so powerful, indeed, that it may seem almost like a sort of fatalism proceeding from, and depending on, themselves, and which we doubt not has been the cause of much erroneous reasoning and doctrine on the part of irreligionists. Mr. Babbage, in his chapter on free-will and necessity in his *Bridgewater Treatise*, illustrates the subject by his calculating machine, which he supposes adjusted so as to make to appear a series of numbers following one another according to a certain law, which law it is in the power of the bystander to change by a readjustment of the machine, up to a certain period, but which afterwards becomes unalterable. And so it seems to be with man. His sensation, disposition, and intellect may be developed and sustained in action by law, in the same manner, as the calculating machine is made to show a certain series of numbers and sustained in action by law. It is in the power of the spectator to alter the law of succession in the series of numbers which are made to appear by the machine, which is still sustained in action by law as heretofore; it is in the power of man greatly to alter and to modify his disposition and character, by a due

attention to those laws by which it is developed and sustained in action. There is a certain point after which it is impossible to readjust the machine so as to alter the nature of the series of numbers that are made to appear ; there is a certain period in life, after which a man's character and disposition and consequent destiny for good or for evil seem to be fixed ; there are some whose moral virtues are so developed and strengthened that it may be said of them in a figurative sense, " That they may take " up serpents, and if they drink any deadly drink " it shall not hurt them ;" while there are others who seem, indeed, to have committed a sin that is unto death—whose moral characters have become so depraved and vitiated, that having eyes they see not, ears they hear not, and understandings they understand not. But though such may be the case, no man can say either of his fellow-man or of himself that he has passed the point at which his fate may be fixed. Far be it from us to say that there are any who should deem themselves so secure that they need not take heed lest they fall ; still less do we wish to say, that hopes of pardon and mercy are not held out unto all. In this respect a certain sort of analogy seems to exist between the corporal and the moral health of man. There are some whose physical constitutions are so fixed by regular and temperate habits, that they

may expose themselves to dangers, privations, and fatigues, without any evil consequences, while there are others who appear to be so broken down by a long course of dissipation and excess, that no human remedies can avail to restore them to health. But, as it would be deemed rashness and folly in the former class of people, trusting to the strength of their constitutions, to expose themselves needlessly to dangers, while the latter, however desperate their case might seem to be, should never leave any means untried to recruit their health or to alleviate their sufferings, so it appears to be with the moral constitution of the human race. No *man* can say of himself, or any other, that he is either past all fear, or beyond all hope. Nevertheless, we do see people of a certain period of life whose virtuous dispositions have been laboriously reared and gradually improved, who appear to be in the firm possession of all goodness, as the well-earned reward of the wholesome discipline through which they have passed, and to be in this world almost enjoying a foretaste of that bliss which is promised after death as the certain reward of righteousness; while others seem to be hardened in all iniquity, abandoned to the violence of all evil passions no longer to be controlled, and never to be eradicated, and merely to be left in this world as living monuments of the sad condition to which

a career of vice and self-indulgence will ultimately reduce its votaries\*.

This view of human nature by no means impugns the goodness of the Deity. Reason and revelation alike lead us to think that the fate of a mortal is determined at or prior to the moment of his decease. There is then, in the existence of all, a period, after which their destiny may be supposed to be fixed and irrevocable. It by no means follows that all should be called out of the world, the instant they have arrived at this period. For aught we know, it may be a part of the divine economy, that men should be allowed to see in this world the states to which they will ultimately be brought by a long perseverance in a virtuous or vicious course of life. The contrast between the old age of a good and bad man may serve as a salutary warning to many.

It may be said that all men are not so circumstanced as to be able to choose a mode of living which will admit of their being virtuous; that many being thrown into positions in which they are compelled to be vicious, before they are able to form any notions of good or evil, first become evil doers through ignorance and the example of others, and afterwards continue so through habit; and

\* Chalmers.

these arguments are supported by the examples to which we have referred above of some who seem to be destined to lives of vice and crime, and others, who seem to be designed for careers of fashionable dissipation and profligacy. And here again we may illustrate the position of a man in a state of probation by that of a pilot in the charge of a ship. The latter may often show greater skill in endeavouring to save a crazy vessel amidst the dangers of a tempest, even though he fail, than in the safe conduct of a new and well-built vessel in calm weather; a man placed in a most unfavourable state of probation may often show himself worthier than one placed in a less trying position. We admit indeed that there are some whose circumstances and position are such, that to us it may appear easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for them to enter on the paths of virtue: but the Almighty seeth not as man seeth. When we attempt to judge of the deserts of others, we know not what opportunities of forsaking their evil ways may have been presented to them, or with what inward warnings of conscience they may have been solicited. We admit the necessity of a merciful dispensation for man, in which he should not be dealt with according to the absolute good or evil he had done, for, if judged by so strict a

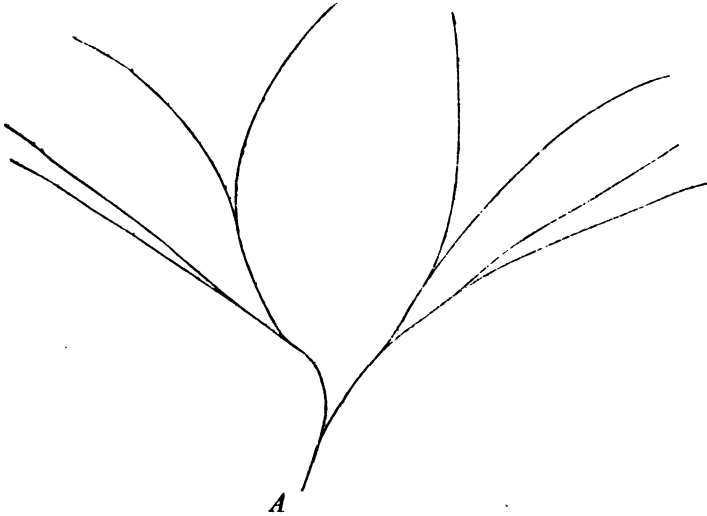
standard, no one could hope to escape future condemnation ; and we may reasonably expect that, in such a dispensation, account shall be taken of the advantages with which each has been endowed, and the opportunities of doing good that have been offered to him. In these expectations we are confirmed by the revelations which have made known to us the existence of this dispensation. In the parable of the labourers being called to work in the vineyard at different hours, those who had been called towards the eleventh hour, received the same wages as those that had been called early in the day. From the promises of beatitude that were held out to the penitent thief on the cross, while he was suffering for crimes which he had just committed, and from the declaration of our Saviour, that at the last day many shall come from the east and the west, and the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of heaven, while the children of promise are to be cast into outer darkness, we may infer that, in the next world, more consideration will be shown for those who, through ignorance or other causes over which they had no control, have erred, than for those who, though instructed in the ways of righteousness, have forsaken the path of their duty. We are far from saying that all are placed in the same advan-

tageous position with regard to their future prospects, or that it is in the power of every one to attain to a like degree of bliss in the world to come. The expectation that all shall be equitably dealt with by no means premises this. Trial may be made of the skill of one pilot in steering a boat across a river ; of another in conducting a ship across the Atlantic. Each may acquit himself to the satisfaction of his employer in the avocation assigned to him, and obtain the reward promised for his services ; but surely the latter would deem his deserts of a superior order, and might equitably expect a higher standard of remuneration than the former. In the parable of the talents, as given in St. Matthew, both the servant who out of his five talents made five others, and he who out of his two talents made two others, acquitted themselves to the satisfaction of their Master—both were ordered to enter into the joy of their Lord ; but as the former had a more important trust committed to his charge than the latter, he might have had assigned to him a higher post of honour, *and, from the version of the parable given in St. Luke, we may suppose that it was so understood at the time of its delivery.*

We have seen the following illustration of the manner in which a man may be guided by his own judgment through life, in spite of the seemingly



all-powerful influences of innate disposition and external circumstances, which, if not strictly logical, is certainly very ingenious :—



The life of man has been compared to a curve, like that in the above diagram, which, after some little distance from the initial point A, splits into different branches, each of which afterwards also is in like manner split, which property all the different branches continue to have till a certain distance from the initial point, after which the different branches are not divided any more.

It is easy to see how a curve of this sort may be made to illustrate the degree of control which each possesses over the destinies of his life. In the years that immediately follow his birth, during which it

must be allowed that his innate disposition and external circumstances have a very considerable, if not an all-powerful influence over his conduct and fortune, the faculties of the mind by which this influence may be modified or controlled being still undeveloped, there may possibly be but one course of life in which he can move. But it is possible that, after these faculties are in some degree brought into use, he may at different times be able to alter or to direct his line of action, or to choose between different courses, notwithstanding the situation in which he may be placed, and in spite of the original natural propensity of his character, which, however faulty, may be much modified by reason and reflection. The course of life which he may lead, for some time afterwards, may depend very much upon his choice or mode of action at this period, after which he may be, as it were, constrained to move in a certain line, until another such opportunity of exercising his own judgment, or choosing his own career, occurs. As the characters of most men become fixed, whether for good or for evil, by long habit, and as circumstances often compel them to persevere in a line of conduct they have once adopted, however they may regret having commenced it, these opportunities of changing their pursuits or altering their habits occur less frequently at an advanced age than during early life, and perhaps after a certain time

never present themselves, after which their fate, as well for this world, as for any other, in which their happiness may depend on their conduct here below, may be said to be fixed. We believe that there are few arrived at an age capable of reflection, who cannot call to mind more than one period in their past years in which much was left to their own judgment and discretion, by the due exercise of which their subsequent career was considerably affected. Thus it may be strictly true that, in the words of the author of "*La Systême de la Nature*," our life may be a line that Nature orders us to describe on the surface of the earth, without our being able to deviate from it for one instant, and, at the same time, there may be a considerable scope allowed for the exercise of our free will. And when we recollect that men on all occasions, even on the most trying emergencies, act more from habit than from reflection, and that their habits may be formed by attention to their conduct in the ordinary affairs of life, on which much of their behaviour on occasions that appear to be very important as regards their future destiny may depend, we believe that, after due reflection, this scope will be allowed to be more extensive, than might be thought on a primary or superficial consideration of the subject.

Mr. Hume says that, in many of our reasonings and discourses about men, we admit the principle

of necessity, though we are unwilling to acknowledge it in words. We ascribe the rise and fall of nations to certain causes; we attribute their prosperity and their adversity to the wisdom and to the folly of their rulers; even the manners and the character of a people are, with great show of reason, said to be formed by the nature of the government under which they live. What is this but acknowledging the force of destiny over man in the aggregate? and surely each individual must be subject to the same laws as those by which the mass of mankind are ruled.

It is not difficult to demonstrate the fallacy of this mode of reasoning of Mr. Hume's, in the same manner as that in which we have endeavoured to disprove the arguments of those who, seeing that the character and conduct of each individual is, to a great extent, influenced by certain causes, deny any freedom of volition or action. It certainly would be vain to deny that the fortunes of nations are much influenced by the causes which Mr. Hume has enumerated. Tyranny and injustice will, in the long run, provoke men to violence and outrage. A mild form of government combined with a just and equitable administration of the laws will attach men to the country in which their lot has been cast. Oppression and insecurity of property will make men idle and poor, who might otherwise be

stimulated by the natural love of bettering their condition to labour and industry. The study of these truths may afford a useful lesson to the statesman. But in spite of the due weight that must be ascribed to these circumstances, and in spite of the advances that have lately been made in the philosophy of history, we are yet far from being able to foretel the fortunes of a nation in the same manner that we are able to trace the path of a projectile; and it must be allowed that there is much uncertainty and much fanciful theory in the works of those who have devoted themselves to the science of politics. But, even if we admit the truth of all these theories to the fullest extent that their warmest supporters may desire, it is not difficult to show that the conclusions that Mr. Hume draws thence, as to every individual acting from necessity, are false. The science of warfare has attained a much greater degree of perfection than that of government; treatises have been written on it, wherein its rules and maxims have been laid down with a degree of precision and certainty that has never been attempted in political philosophy; the manœuvres of skilful generals in the command of hostile armies have, with some show of reason, been compared to the moves of chess-players; we attribute the successes and the reverses of the armies to the wisdom and to the folly of the leaders;

even the bravery and the general conduct of the soldiers are said to be affected by the character of the commander, and the system he adopts in the conduct of the war. But these facts have never led any one to the conclusion that each individual soldier is not at liberty to fight or to run away, or that the individuals of which armies are composed, are mere passive instruments moved by the wills of their rulers, subject to certain fixed rules, in the same manner as chessmen are moved by players. What would be thought of a soldier who attempted to defend any misconduct of which he might have been guilty, by saying that all his actions were ordered by his general, and nothing depended on himself? Or, if we may again make use of the metaphor of ships at sea, though it is tolerably certain that a number of shipwrecks will take place on a stormy night, it cannot be said that the pilots and the crew of each vessel have not the power to use their utmost exertion to save the vessels committed to their charge. In the same manner, though it is tolerably certain that the folly and the tyranny of their rulers will cause a people to be discontented, and may provoke them to crime and outrage, it cannot be said that each individual is not at liberty to refrain from crime, if he chooses.

Again, we may expose the fallacy of Mr. Hume's arguments by a very simple example. It is related

that Lord Chesterfield, in the middle of the eighteenth century, declared his conviction that ere long a revolution of an extraordinary and sanguinary nature would take place in France. Can the perpetrators and abettors of the atrocious crimes that took place during the Reign of Terror be said to have acted entirely of necessity, because a man of superior mind was able to foretel these events from the causes that led to them? This will also throw considerable light on the co-existence of free-will and the prescience of the Deity, which we shall now proceed to consider.

Before entering on this part of the subject, we wish to draw the attention of the reader to the absurdity of beings of finite understandings and limited capacities constituting themselves judges and critics of the ways of an Infinite Being. From the universe and all that is therein, which are

“ As the book of God before us set,  
“ Wherein to read his wondrous works,”

we have the clearest proofs of the existence of a Being of infinite power and wisdom, by whom all things were created, and without whom was nothing made that was made. That such a Being must be endowed with omniscience and foreknowledge has at all times been allowed; and the possession of these attributes has been further

proved by the recent discoveries of science, which lead us to think that all those marks of adaptation and design in the creation, which theologians have looked upon as proofs of His existence, and evidences of His intentions, are merely links in an infinite system, the whole of which had been planned and conceived by Him, ere the foundations of the earth were laid. Three centuries before the Christian era, the wisest of the ancients deplored the mere nothingness of human knowledge ; since that time, the discoveries of science have shown us that the sphere in which he thought his knowledge nothing, is a "mere spot, a grain, an atom in the universe compared." Much as the field of human knowledge has been enlarged, the extent of the field of the unknown has become still more apparent. The discoveries that have revealed to us the laws of our system, have also led us to suppose that our sun and its satellites are merely an infinitely small part of a system, millions of which appear to exist in the universe. The progress that has been made in the science which investigates the nature and constitution of the globe which we inhabit, shows us that the period of its being tenanted by beings like ourselves is but a brief space in the countless ages that have elapsed since its formation. Who then are we, mere ephemeral beings of dust and ashes, that we should judge of the ways of the Maker



and Ruler of all? Should we not expect, prior to our experience, that there are things in the Divine economy that we, with all our philosophy, are unable to comprehend; should not these reflections teach us—

To be lowly wise—

To think only what concerns us and our being,  
To know that which before us lies in life  
Is the prime wisdom; what more is fame  
Or emptiness, or fond impertinence,  
And renders us in things that must concern  
Unpractised, unprepared?

It surely is unpardonable rashness and folly in men to reject truths of which they have the clearest evidence, to risk the loss of future happiness, to incur the danger of eternal misery, because there are more things in heaven and earth than their philosophy ever dreamt of.

The proofs of the existence of a God appear to all who have bestowed proper attention on them to be quite incapable of contradiction, and remain the same, whether men examine them or not. The natural indications given to men that this transitory life is designed to be a state of probation, are further confirmed by revelation. It concerns all to inquire into the truth of these propositions. They may be understood even by the most untu-

tored intellect. The veriest rustic is able to understand that God made the world and mankind, and that he will after death render unto every man according to his deeds. He at least sees nothing incompatible in the truth of both of these propositions. If incontestable proofs of their veracity were brought before him, he certainly would not reject them on account of any metaphysical difficulties. In judging of the ways of Providence we are all as rustics. Alas! for those who, puffed up with this world's knowledge, reject these truths. Cannot they understand that God has placed men in a state of probation, and that He has made them free to fall as well as free to stand? No person is offended because God has made him free to stand. That He has made him free to fall has been a stumbling-block unto many. The prescience of the Deity cannot affect this freedom in any way. Men are offended, not because the Almighty has given them liberty, but, because he has not so far deprived them of their liberty, as to make it impossible that they should fall. Surely, if He has given them light sufficient to preserve them from falling, they are foolish to lose themselves in the inquiry, why they have been allowed to fall, or whether their Maker foresaw their fall, or how it is possible that beings created by one endowed with prescience can be free. The wisdom of such

appears to us in no way to exceed that of the nocturnal traveller in the fable, who fell into the pit, while gazing on the moon and stars, and forming fanciful theories respecting their nature and motions, instead of availing himself of the light they afforded him, to guide him on his way.

The inquiry, why man has been made free to fall, might also lead to endless dissertations concerning the origin of evil. Several attempts have been made to explain this, in some of which we think it has been satisfactorily shown that, what we deem evil may be a necessary consequence of the relation of things, and of the progressive system by which the Almighty works. But, surely, if we have evidence sufficient to convince us that we are placed here in a state of probation, and if we have given to us light sufficient to avoid the evil and to choose the good, it would be idle to perplex ourselves with the inquiries why we are so placed, or to allow any difficulties in which such inquiries might involve us, either to influence our belief or to regulate our conduct. Indeed, the existence of evil seems to be almost necessary for a state of probation, for without it how could trial be made of the virtue of an individual? And if any one thinks that trial might be made of our characters with a less mixture of evil than we behold in this world of ours, we would

reply to him in the following words taken from the introduction to Butler's "Analogy:"

" Suppose a person of a speculative turn of  
" mind, to go on with his reveries, till he had at  
" length fixed upon some particular plan of nature,  
" as appearing to him the best. One shall scarcely  
" be thought guilty of detraction against human  
" understanding, if one should say even beforehand,  
" that the plan which this speculative person  
" would fix upon, though he were the wisest of the  
" sons of men, probably would not be the best,  
" even according to his own notions of *best*, whe-  
" ther he thought that to be so which afforded  
" occasions and motives for the exercise of the  
" greatest virtue, or which was productive of the  
" greatest happiness, or that these two were neces-  
" sarily connected and ran up into one and the  
" same plan. However, it may not be amiss, once  
" for all, to see what would be the amount of these  
" emendations and imaginary improvements upon  
" the system of nature, and how far they would mis-  
" lead us. And it seems there can be no stopping,  
" till we come to such conclusions as these, that  
" all creatures should at first be made as perfect  
" and happy as they are capable of ever being;  
" that nothing to be sure of hazard or danger  
" should be put upon them to do; some indolent  
" person would, perhaps, think nothing at all, or

“ certainly that effectual care should be taken that  
“ they should, whether necessarily or not, yet eventually and in fact always, do what was right and  
“ most conducive to happiness, which would be  
“ thought easy for infinite power to effect, either  
“ by not giving them any principles which would  
“ endanger their going wrong, or by laying the  
“ right motives of action before their minds continually in so strong a manner, as would never  
“ fail of inducing them to act conformably to it;  
“ and that the whole method of punishment should  
“ be rejected as absurd, as an awkward roundabout method of carrying things on—nay, as  
“ contrary to a principal purpose for which it  
“ would be supposed creatures are made, namely,  
“ happiness.”

Leaving this subject, then, which, though it may present some difficulties to speculative inquirers among beings of limited comprehension, ought certainly in no way either to affect the belief or to guide the conduct of any reasonable man, we wish to say a few words concerning the inferences that some draw from the omnipotence and the omniscience of the Deity with regard to the credibility of future punishments. Some think it incredible that a just and benevolent Deity will punish the creatures of His making, for having been overcome by the temptations by which he had permitted them to be

assailed, as he might have endowed them with greater strength of character, or placed them in different circumstances. Now we would remind such an one that it cannot be supposed that the inhabitants of the earth, a mere speck in the universe, are the only creatures under the moral government of the Almighty: many things lead us to think that we are morally, as well as physically, in the midst of a great system continually progressing, infinite in duration and extent. There are, probably, many beings besides ourselves, some of them possibly the inhabitants of other planets, in a state of probation. The fear of future punishment may deter many of them from committing sin. It is probable that some of them are able to behold the conduct of man in this world, and the consequences thereof to him after death. How, then, would beings so circumstanced be affected, if man were allowed to sin with impunity? Their natures may in some respects resemble those of the inhabitants of this earth; their conduct may possibly depend a good deal on their moral characters, their fear of punishment, and the degree of temptation to which they are exposed. And it may be presumed that the rules by which the Almighty governs the universe are designed, not for the sole benefit of the inhabitants of any one planet, but for that of the whole creation. If, then, neither his moral

character, nor the fear of future punishment are sufficiently powerful to prevent man being overcome by temptation in certain circumstances, a regard to the general good might induce the Almighty to preserve the innocence of the rest of his creatures, by maintaining and increasing one powerful safeguard against their being overcome—the fear of future punishment. In most of the best governed states of the earth, the necessity of capital punishments has been admitted and deplored. The suffering of a few preserves the integrity, and secures the lives and the properties of the many. In like manner the eternal misery of some evil-doers may be necessary to preserve the innocence of the majority of created beings. For aught that can be said to the contrary, we may now be in the midst of a system the purport of which is eventually to preserve all in innocence, by making them witnesses of the punishments of those who have already transgressed. Things may have been ordered so as to combine as much happiness with as small a degree of suffering as possible. On this supposition the punishment of the few may be necessary for the greatest good of the greatest number.

We admit that these considerations may induce many to take a rather dreary view of the prospects of the human race. They may say, “Granted

“ that a system of optimism has been established  
“ by the Almighty, which system may require the  
“ punishment and misery of the inhabitants of the  
“ earth ; all the inhabitants who have ever existed,  
“ or ever will exist on the surface of this globe,  
“ bear an infinitely small proportion to the myriads  
“ of other rational creatures that have been made,  
“ or that may hereafter be made by Him. The  
“ misery of the former is as nothing compared with  
“ the universal happiness produced by their punish-  
“ ment ; but those who are suffering tribulation  
“ and anguish in consequence of their deeds done  
“ in this world, will, in the midst of their torments,  
“ derive but small consolation from the reflection  
“ that they are miserable, in order that others  
“ may be rendered better and happier ; possibly  
“ this system may require the eternal misery of  
“ all the human race. Surely men can draw but  
“ small hope or comfort for the future, from the  
“ philosophy which teaches them that they may  
“ possibly be destined to be, as it were, the scape-  
“ goats of the creation.”

We, ourselves, confess that reasoning unaided by revelation might make us look to the future with fear and trembling. When we behold the exceeding folly and wickedness of mankind—when we recollect that the annals of nations are little more than catalogues of crimes, that among those



who have made unto themselves a name in history, the majority have been anything but benefactors to their race, and that good and virtuous men appear but as rare exceptions among them—and when we consider the many failings and imperfections even of the best,—we are well nigh tempted to exclaim, “Who then can be saved?” Ancient philosophers to whom the light of revelation never had been given, and modern writers who have rejected revelation and scoffed at religion, have admitted and deplored the depravity of the human race. All have come short of moral perfection—all have done evil—all will continue to do so, while their nature remains the same. A system of strict retributive justice would require that all should be punished. There is no reason that its rules, so conducive to the general good, should be set aside in favour of the inhabitants of this planet. Such a disregard of its laws might possibly derange the whole system of moral government established by the Almighty. “Oh, wretched men, who can deliver them from the body of this death? I thank God through the Lord Jesus Christ.” A revelation has come to us which expressly assures us, that the nature of man is corrupted and fallen on account of the transgression of his first parents; that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; that all have incurred His wrath and

displeasure; that the Almighty, who wished not that any of his creatures should perish, made a tremendous sacrifice to save them from the consequences of their own transgressions and of the evil and corrupted nature which they have inherited from their progenitors. Reason leads us to think that He could not have pardoned mankind, without diminishing in other creatures that dread of punishment which is such a salutary preservative of their innocence. Revelation shows us how He has made a way by which mankind may escape the natural consequences of their transgressions, without the violation of those laws, the due maintenance of which is necessary for the good of the universe. The impunity of man might have induced other creatures to transgress. The Almighty preserves them from falling by the warning voice which saith, "God, who spared not His only son, how will He spare you who continue in your evil ways?"

These revelations also by which we are informed of the fallen nature of man, and of a merciful interposition on the part of the Almighty, whereby the consequences that must otherwise inevitably have resulted from that fall are averted, must tend to clear up any difficulty that may arise in the minds of some, from beholding the occasionally all-powerful influence which circumstances and natural disposition have over a man's life and mode of conduct.

We have already endeavoured to show that, powerful as this influence may be, its existence does not necessarily disprove that of some independent self-governing faculty in man. But here we may possibly be met with an argument such as this: "Granted that such a faculty may exist, of what use is it, if, nevertheless, a man is thereby unable to withstand the force of circumstances, and the impulses of his animal nature?" To adopt the simile that has been made use of to overthrow the arguments of the fatalists, of what profit is it to have the most skilful pilot on board of a ship, if the force of the winds and the waves is so great that all his exertions and all his skill are unavailing? Does not the position of man in this world often appear to resemble that of the pilot of a ship so exposed? Who is there who at some period of his life might not have exclaimed, in the words of the Colchan magician of yore,—

— *Video meliora probaque,*  
*Deteriora sequor ?*

Do not the best and wisest acknowledge that they often perform deeds that they lament, as it were, in spite of themselves?

We certainly admit that there is too much reason to fear that the animal nature and brute propensities of man seem to have acquired an ascendancy over the reasoning part and virtuous disposition of

his constitution, traces of which appear, nevertheless, we believe even in the most barbarous nations; and as we observe how much the power of the former may be increased or diminished by habit in one individual, and still more in a succession of generations, we should be prepared, even prior to being instructed by any revelation, to suppose that some former generations of men had allowed them to gain that ascendancy which certainly does now exist, and which, however it may be contended against, however it may be modified, cannot be entirely uprooted from the nature of any human being. Does not the present constitution of human nature therefore afford a very strong *a priori* argument in favour of the truth of that revelation in which we are informed that, in consequence of the transgression of our first parents, our nature has become corrupt and degenerate? that even the best of men do the things they would not, and the things that they would, those they do not? The same revelation informs them that a wonderful interposition has been made by the Almighty to save them in another world from the natural consequence of those things that they are so compelled to do in this; that though men may seem to be unable to resist the evil impulses of their nature and all-powerful force of circumstances, it is, nevertheless, the duty of all to contend, as far as in them lies,

against these influences; that in their endeavours to do so, assistance will be given to them, if they will ask for it humbly and reverentially, which latter they surely are at liberty to do, and for the omission of which they may justly be held accountable. Thus, if, in some senses, the assertion made in the "*Système de la Nature*," that "man, " as it were, borne always and overwhelmed by a " torrent" be true, it is also true that there is one standing on the bank of the torrent ready to assist him, if he asks it; and though he may be unable of himself to resist the force of the torrent, yet he certainly is able to ask for assistance; that though those who are not aware of the assistance so proffered to them may be saved in other ways, if they endeavour as far as in them lies to strive against the force of the torrent, yet that those who are aware of it, and are too proud or too heedless to ask for it, may justly be left to take the consequences of their own presumption or their own negligence.

After all, much of the difficulty in the questions concerning free will and fatalism arises from the inability of men to form adequate notions of the omnipotence of the Creator. They are too apt to judge of His powers by comparing them with their own; they are utterly unable to form anything that has will, independence, or freedom of action in itself; therefore they cannot understand how the

Creator can effect what seems to their frail powers an impossibility. This difficulty has confounded alike the religious moralist and the infidel philosopher. Hartley, part ii., chap. 1, prop. 16, says—

“ To suppose that man has a power independent of  
 “ God is to suppose that God’s power does not ex-  
 “ tend to all things, *i. e.* is not infinite. If it be  
 “ said that the power itself depends upon God, but  
 “ the execution of it upon man, the same difficulty  
 “ occurs: since the execution does not depend upon  
 “ God, there will be something produced in the  
 “ world which is not the effect of His power; and  
 “ the same thing holds good, if we refine further,  
 “ and proceed to the exertion of the exertion. If  
 “ this depend upon man, God’s power will be  
 “ limited by man’s; if upon God, we return to the  
 “ hypothesis of necessity and God’s being the author  
 “ of all things.” “ If this depend upon man, the  
 “ thing in man on which it depends, call it what  
 “ you please, must either depend upon God or not;  
 “ if it does, necessity returns, if not, God’s infinite  
 “ power is infringed. Once more, man is free, when  
 “ he is able to do that which he wishes, but he is  
 “ not free to wish: it is impossible that he should  
 “ wish without a cause, if that cause is not followed  
 “ by a certain effect, it is not a cause.”

Voltaire says, “ What a glorious conception is  
 “ that of the eternal destinies of all beings sus-  
 “ pended like chains from the throne of the Creator

“ of all worlds. Suppose for a moment that this is  
“ not the case, and that a certain chimerical liberty  
“ renders uncertain every event; suppose that one  
“ of the substances intermediate between us and  
“ the great Being (for there are millions such)  
“ consults the great Being concerning the destinies  
“ of one of the enormous globes placed at such a  
“ distance from us, the Sovereign Lord of Nature  
“ would then be obliged to reply to him—I am  
“ not Sovereign Lord, I am not the great necessary  
“ Being; each little embryo is able to make its  
“ own destinies.”

These arguments, on which these two philosophers have laid so much stress, appear to us to be answered by a reflection which Voltaire has made elsewhere, concerning the prescience of the Creator, and which may be said in the same spirit with regard to his omnipotence, of which indeed the former attribute is a necessary consequence. “ We  
“ neither do nor can understand the omniscience of  
“ God, and all his attributes are to us impenetrable abysses. This dispute concerning the omniscience of God has caused so many disputes, only  
“ because man is ignorant and presumptuous.”

In the same manner we neither do nor can understand the omnipotence of God. In our disputes about His works we forget that with Him all things are possible. Man is indeed unable to comprehend how he can be free, or how anything created can

be free ; but finding that he certainly is free to act as he wishes, he goes a step further back, and says that he is not free to wish. We think we have already shown that the existence of this liberty to wish is by no means disproved by the influence which man's physical constitution and external circumstances are allowed to have in forming his wishes and desires, and even in influencing his judgment. Let philosophers refine as far as they will, there is a certain independent self-governing power in man, to which, though it may be occasionally modified and controlled by external circumstances, they must come at last. What this power is, and how it has been created they are unable to understand, as a great many things that are daily seen and experienced are to them incomprehensible. As we have already remarked, the phenomenon of life or that of sensation is not more hard to be understood, than that of freedom ; and the difficulty of comprehending how man can be free is considerably enhanced by the admission of the hypothesis, that man, not only in his physical structure, but also in what is commonly called his moral and spiritual part, is merely an exquisitely organized piece of mechanism. If, however, it be admitted that the soul has an existence separate from and independent of that of the body, the freedom of man becomes less obscure, and less hard



to be understood. What is called "destiny" may then be admitted to be only the law to which the material part of the universe is subject. But the soul of man may be something quite different. Though man may be placed so low on the scale of spiritual beings that his soul is intimately connected with matter, and though it cannot break the tie which so connects it, yet may it be regarded as independent of the laws of matter. We have already shown that the hypothesis of successive development, as expounded in the "Vestiges," by no means proves the impossibility of the separate existence of the soul; nor do we deem it to be proved by any of the arguments so often made use of by materialists, which are founded on the intimate connection that is observed to subsist between the body of man and what is commonly called his mind. But whatever be the nature of the thinking principle, whether it depend upon a certain organization of matter or not, which it appears we were not designed to comprehend, we certainly know that we do possess a sufficient degree of intellect to understand the truths of natural religion, and to be answerable for the use we make of our talents in this life. Let those who are too wise in their own conceits to endeavour to act as beings who may one day be called to give an account of their stewardships, beware of the consequences.

## CHAPTER V.

### ON A SPECIAL PROVIDENCE, AND THE EFFICACY OF PRAYER.

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To prove that everything that we see around us, and all that we experience as passing within us, that the heavenly bodies, the earth, the trees, and plants, animals and men, their desires, passions, and actions, have all been produced by fixed and immutable laws, acting on matter for an indefinite space of time, has been the great object of the work to which we have so often referred. Indeed, its author does not appear so anxious to maintain the truth of any one law in particular, or of any special hypothesis relating to cosmogeny or natural history, as to insist on the great fact, that the whole world, inanimate and animate—that every sentient being, and every thinking principle has been formed, developed, and continues to be sus-

tained in action by law—"that all the secular destinies of our race, are but evolutions from a primal arrangement in the counsels of the Deity." In the explanations, which form a sequel to the "Vestiges of the Creation," the author goes on to say that the great purpose of his work to which the idea of an organic creation, in the manner of natural law, is merely subordinate and administrative, as likewise the Nebular hypothesis, and the doctrine of a fixed natural order in mind and morals, is to show that the whole revelation of the works of God presented to our senses and reason, is a system based in, what we are compelled, for want of a better term, to call, "law," by which however is not meant a system independent of or exclusive of the Deity, but one which only proposes a certain mode of His working. We have endeavoured to prove that the establishment of this hypothesis concerning the mode of working of the Deity, does not in any way eclipse or diminish the image of His glory reflected in His works, but, on the contrary, very much magnifies and exalts our conceptions of His greatness and His power, inasmuch as it furnishes us with proofs of a much more comprehensive system of design, and presents to us a more exalted view of His wise and benevolent intentions which were formed, ere the foundations of the world were laid, than if we had supposed

that every advance in the creation had been made by an independent and unconnected act of divine power. And the proof of a designing and contriving mind, so manifested, as clearly establishes the personality of the Deity, as distinguished from a general principle, as if he had been supposed to act in the latter mode. Paley, in his chapter on the personality of the Deity, says truly, that whatever designs, contrives, and foresees, must be a person; and this observation applies whether the works in which design, contrivance, and foresight are conspicuous have been accomplished by frequent and unconnected interpositions, or by some vast and comprehensive law or system of laws. Those who used to regard the Creator, as accomplishing every thing by separate acts of power, could have had no hesitation in allowing the existence of a special and ever *présiding* Providence; but some have looked upon the recent discoveries of science with no small degree of pious fear, lest, though law did not suppose a system independent of the Deity, it should give rise to the opinion that the Almighty, having once ordained a plan which should lead to the creation of all things, both the things that have been, now are, or are to be hereafter, took no care nor interest in the working of the system, of which He had been the grand Author; and we must acknowledge, that some of the advocates and sup-

porters of this theory of the creation appear to be in no small danger of incurring the charge of believing in that doctrine which Plato, in his "Republic," places second among the three species of blasphemy or sacrilege which he enumerates therein:—

*" τὸ δεύτερον ὄντας Θεοῦς οὐ φροντίζειν ἄνθρωπον "—*

admitting the existence of God, but denying His care for man. There are some passages in the "Vestiges," which might induce one to suspect that the author was of a similar opinion. Far be it from us to assert that such are his opinions: we merely wished to advert to them, with the view of combating, and, if possible, of disproving the erroneous doctrine which may possibly be founded on these passages. For it must be allowed that opinions of this sort would tend much to overthrow all sentiments of piety and veneration, which it is the principal object of natural theology to promote; they would in a great measure destroy all incentives to virtue, which either the fear or the love of Him might inspire, and annihilate all feeling of dependence on Him, and the habit of looking to Him for comfort in the time of affliction: and not only do they cast a degree of discredit on revelation in general, but they are also totally subversive of the authority of that religion which inculcates in men the duty, and teaches them to believe in the efficacy of prayer;

which exhorts them to look up to their Heavenly Father, as a very present help in time of trouble, and tells those who are afflicted to be of good cheer, for that without Him not one sparrow falls to the ground, and that the very hairs of their heads are numbered.

Before proceeding further with this subject, we wish to state that it is not our aim or object to prove that the Almighty *does* continually watch over the progress and the working of that system, of which He has been the first great cause; and that He *does* actually care for the welfare, and interfere in the concerns, of the inhabitants of the globes which he has created. Nor shall we consider whether it is more likely that this wonderful system is moved and upheld by His immediate personal agency, or by secondary causes dependent on Him. These subjects have been amply treated of in the works of Dr. Clark and others; and it would be needless in us to repeat the arguments made use of by these eminent Divines: our only object is to show that there is nothing in the recent progress of science that need weaken our belief in the propositions so ably maintained and so fully illustrated by them. We shall therefore content ourselves with endeavouring to prove that the existence of a special Providence constantly watching over and occasionally interfering in the affairs of men, is perfectly possible;

even though it were satisfactorily demonstrated that all we see around us, both animate and inanimate, has been produced by the continued operation of one or more immutable laws established an indefinite length of time ago by the Creator.

Perhaps we cannot illustrate our object better than by quoting the words of Dr. Chalmers on the use of hypothesis in theology. "A proposition in  
" theology may be sustained by appropriate evidence of its own; and a proposition which has  
" been conjured up in its defence, may add nothing  
" affirmative to these evidences. But, though it  
" makes no addition, either to their number or  
" their strength, it does much if it but throw a  
" shield of protection over them; and this it does,  
" if it but displaces or neutralizes the hostile  
" argument that has been devised for their overthrow."

We need scarcely add, that the same observations hold good in a more extended sense concerning several hypotheses. One hypothesis may accomplish what to some may seem imperfectly effected by another; and the united forces of several such for neutralizing or displacing hostile arguments designed for the overthrow of any proposition in theology must be strong indeed. If one hypothesis be allowed to weaken the force of such a presumption against a

proposition in theology, several must show them to be utterly futile.

And here let us remark that the fear which has arisen in the minds of many, lest the notions that have latterly been propounded concerning the *modus operandi* of Him by whom all things are and were created, should be incompatible with His other attributes of watching over, caring for, and protecting the interests of individuals, arises in some measure from their proneness to fall into the error of anthropomorphising God. They can imagine a great Being originating and establishing laws which should in the course of time bring into existence the world, such as we now behold it ; but they cannot conceive how, while He is, perhaps, creating new worlds, He may also be present in every part of those He has already created. They are too apt to measure His infinite powers by the feebleness of their own—they are unable fully to comprehend His omnipotence and His omniscience. It is more especially to be lamented that this error should arise in the minds of those who believe in the revelations in which the inspired writer thus addresses the Deity—“ Thy knowledge is too wonderful for  
“ me ; it is high ; I cannot attain unto it. If I ascend  
“ up into heaven, thou art there ; if I make my bed  
“ in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the  
“ wings of the morning and dwell in the utter-



“ most parts of the sea, even there shall thy  
“ hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold  
“ me.”

We believe that the opinions to which we have alluded are very closely allied with a species of atheism, which, while it does not deny the existence of an intelligent and designing being, maintains that the so-called laws of nature, such as the law of gravitation, are independent of Him. Those who are seduced by this doctrine, think that the God whose existence they are ready to acknowledge, from the numerous marks of design to be found everywhere in the works of the creation, merely arranged and predisposed the matter in such a manner that, by the continued action of certain necessary laws, which, though known to Him, were quite independent of His power, it should in the course of time bring into existence worlds, plants, animals, and men. Before proceeding to show the error of this opinion, it is necessary for us to call attention to the ubiquity of design to be found throughout the universe. It is not merely on isolated marks of contrivance, to be found here and there, that the arguments of the natural theologian rest, though these, indeed, would afford evidence of the existence of a designing mind somewhere. Nor do they rest on traces of his workmanship which are found merely in one solitary spot of

ground situated in the midst of a chaos. Indications of design present themselves in every region of the earth to which man has penetrated. Our earth is discovered to belong to a planetary system throughout which the hand of the same designer is to be traced. It is true that our limited faculties do not enable us to perceive the same examples of design on the surface of the other planets as are seen on that of our own globe ; but the mechanism of the system furnishes us with ample evidence in support of our assertion. Indeed, we never heard of any species of theism which maintained that the formation of the heavenly bodies was not to be ascribed to the Deity of whom so many traces are to be found on earth, or that a greater degree of power had been manifested in the formation of one part of the universe than in the rest. Truly, " The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows his handy works." The further our sphere of knowledge is extended, the more of His works are embraced therein. Recent discoveries of science have led us to suppose that new astral systems are continually being formed throughout the regions of space by the same power, as that to which we ascribe the formation of the system of which our solar system constitutes a part. We may surely, then, be allowed to assume the unity and ubiquity of design throughout the universe, as

a well-established fact, which may be made the basis of future reasonings.

Now having premised this, we shall not, in endeavouring to refute the doctrine to which we have alluded, take any notice of the numerous disputes there have been concerning the possibility of the self-existence of matter. We would first ask the supporters of this doctrine, what they mean by the word "law"? A law is merely the mode in which an agent acts, and necessarily pre-supposes an agent. To assert, therefore, that one being arranged and pre-disposed the matter, which was subject to the influence of laws over which He had no control, and by the aid of which the universe was brought into the state in which we now see it, is to maintain that two separate and independent agents were concerned in the formation of the universe, an assertion which the unity of design manifest throughout renders absurd. But we will even allow, for argument's sake, that what is commonly called matter may obey certain laws of motion, without the exertion of any positive act of power on the part of an agent; and we will suppose that its power of attracting and its being attracted inversely as the square of the distance, is satisfactorily accounted for by some of the hypotheses of the atheist philosophers. We are then to suppose that the Almighty so nicely arranged and

adjusted the whole of this self-existing matter, which obeyed certain blind impulses of motion over which He had no control, that, in the process of time, without any further intervention on His part, it should produce certain wonderful specimens of ingenuity and skill, which have furnished a theme of admiration to all intelligent beings, as monuments of the foresight and wisdom that He must have employed in laying the foundations of the world. Does not this supposition imply a manifest impossibility? Would not this same law of gravitation by which the harmony and regularity now established throughout the universe is preserved, have prevented a being who had no power over it from bringing the primeval chaos into any state of order? To us it appears as easy to conceive that any being of finite powers could alter the course of the heavenly bodies, as that the Creator could make an arrangement of matter according to a plan of His own, while it was acted on by certain laws of motion over which He had no control. To say that it was an original fortuitous state of matter that allowed Him to make His arrangements, is to recur to the system of total atheism, which has already been refuted. To say that by His superior power He was able to counteract the laws of motion, is to acknowledge that they are *not* independent of Him, which is all that we contend for. It surely cannot be said that He made use of the existing laws of

nature to aid Him in the formation of worlds, in the same manner that a man may avail himself of the power of gravitation, in raising a weight by a lever, or of the first law of motion, in throwing a stone, or firing a ball at a mark. For in these examples the skill of the workman is exercised over an infinitely small portion of the universe ; the laws of which he avails himself are seen to act throughout the world for purposes totally independent of him, and in places where he has never been. But this cannot be said of the works of the Creator. His hand is to be traced everywhere ; wherever we have any proof of the working of these laws, they seem to concur to bring about some end, which must have been designed by Him at the beginning of the world. The universality of design demonstrates the omnipotency of the designer.

Now that we have, we trust, established these two facts of the omnipresence and the omnipotence of the Deity, we shall do well once more to recall, in as few words as possible, all that has been proved or attempted to be proved in the book to which we have so often referred, or any of those other treatises which are thought to lead to the negation of a special Providence. Let it be granted then, as is maintained in these books, that it has been satisfactorily shown that the material part (which, according to them, comprehends the whole) of the creation has been formed by certain laws, acting

possibly for an indefinite length of time on nebulous matter, what then? Is there anything either in this proposition itself, or in the reasonings by which it is sought to establish it, which renders it impossible, or even improbable, that these laws are carried into effect by the immediate personal presence of the Almighty? A law, as we have before remarked, is merely the mode according to which an agent acts: "It implies a power, for it is the order according to which the power acts\*!" If, then, it has been proved that the Almighty has acted by the same law for an indefinite length of time, does it by any means follow that all should not have been done by His immediate personal agency? For aught that has been shown to the contrary, the whole system may be immediately sustained, upheld, and worked by Him, who was the original designer and mover of all. The idea that many have entertained, that He is everywhere, that he pervades and sustains the whole creation, and every individual in the creation, is by no means incompatible with the hypothesis of everything being done by law.

"Der Allumfasser,

Der Allerhalter.

Passet und erhält er nicht

Sich, mich, sich selbst?"—GÖTTE.

\* Paley.

And certainly no argument has been brought forward which can in any way lead us to think that He by whose will, and for whose pleasure all things are and were created, should take no interest in that wonderful system of which He was the originator, or cease to care for those living creatures whom the working of his laws has brought into existence; and those nobler beings said to be made in his image, and endowed with faculties to scan and to admire His works. Is it not almost insulting to the human reason to be expected to credit that He, who bestowed such exquisite care in the formation of all things that we see around us, as also in devising the system, and ordaining the laws, by these exquisite models of art have been produced, takes no pleasure or no interest in those very things which are regarded as wonderful specimens of His skill and ingenuity, and cited as proofs of the wisdom wherewith He has laid the foundation of the world? What should we think of an architect who had erected a building for his own pleasure, and cared not for his work, after it had been completed, though it was regarded with the greatest admiration by others; or of a watchmaker who made watches for his pleasure, and cared not whether they went well or ill? If we were told that Sir C. Wren did not pride himself on the completion of that noble cathedral which he saw built entirely under his

own auspices, we should immediately conclude that he must have been in his dotage. It is true that human functionaries often make things for the use of others, in which they cannot be expected to take so much interest, as in those made for themselves, and the working of which, as they are not endowed with omnipresence, they are unable to superintend, and which they are obliged to entrust to what they call "chance," that is to the agency of laws, the effects of which they are unable to foresee, and over which they have no control. Moreover, the pride of men in the productions of their bygone years is often destroyed by lapse of time, deficiency of memory, change of taste. But this is caused entirely by human imperfections and the limited capacity of the human understanding, and can never be the case with Him, by whom and for whose pleasure all things are and were created, with whom there is no variableness or shadow of change. It appears to us that the omnipresence of the Deity so beautifully described in the passage already quoted, has been overlooked by many well-wishers to religion.

Here we shall probably be met with the reply—Suppose that He *does* watch over the system which He has devised, and that He *does* care for the living creatures whom He has brought into existence; or even allow that the whole system is main-



tained and upheld, and its laws carried into effect by His immediate personal agency, the continuance of which may be requisite to carry out the plan of creation—what does that profit us? All this has been done by laws which have been fixed and invariable since time begun; it would, therefore, be presumptuous in man to suppose that these should be changed or suspended for his benefit; such a suspension or alteration might possibly derange the whole plan of the creation, which may be allowed to be one of optimism. He may take delight in the *general* happiness of His creatures, and may have made this the principal end and object of the system of law by which the world is governed; but with the individual what can He do? He may wish to see the virtuous man rewarded even in this world, but He cannot or will not allow himself to interpose, aid, or assist him in his pilgrimage here below; He may compassionate his sufferings, but will do nothing to mitigate their severity, or to console him in the hour of need. He may take delight in the piety of His creatures—He may be well pleased that they put their trust in him,—but He will under no circumstances allow himself to be moved by the prayers of His elect, who cry unto him by day and night.

We will not attempt to reply to these arguments, nor to vindicate the general plan of the govern-

ment of the universe, by insisting on the truth so ably illustrated in Butler's "Analogy," that virtue, as such, is generally rewarded even in this world, and that vice, as such, generally leads to misery; so much so that it is thought by many that the virtuous and the vicious, if they live long enough, are sure in this stage of existence to meet with the recompense due to their deeds; although the very knowledge of this truth ought to be a strong inducement to men to walk in the paths of virtue, and cannot fail to be a source of consolation to the righteous when struggling with adversity, and might seem to many to supersede all necessity for special interpositions. Nor shall we dwell on the physical effect that prayer may be supposed to have on the minds of the petitioners, and so make men pious and virtuous, and put them in the way of obtaining that happiness which, as we have just observed, is the reward of virtue upon earth. It is true that the attainment of virtue, and such rational happiness here below as men may reasonably pray for, seems to be the natural consequence of earnest and sincere devotion. This provision of Nature, if we may use the expression, ought of itself to afford sufficient encouragement to men to pray without ceasing, whatever ideas they may entertain about the credibility of special interpositions, inasmuch as it appears that the natural effect of prayer and meditation will be

to make them virtuous, and that virtue is the surest road to happiness in this world. Thus it would appear that that system "on which the whole revelation of the works of God is presented to us," which, for want of a better term, we are obliged to call "law," contains a provision for answering the prayers of mortals, at least when they are offered for the attainment of proper objects. And, surely, no one could expect that a wise being should plan a system which should contain a provision for granting every petition which an erring and sinful creature might at any moment make. This provision, such as it is, being part of the system of laws, or a result of the system of laws which He has established, must be regarded as a signal proof of benevolent design and foresight on His part. It may very properly be classed among those affections of the mind which conduce to the well-being of society, and tend to promote the happiness of the human race, to which we have already made allusion. But we do not wish, in this place at least, to dwell on any arguments that may be founded on this provision of Nature; our object is to prove that, notwithstanding all that has been demonstrated concerning the invariability of the laws by which the Deity has created, and by which He still continues to govern the universe, it is still in His power to interfere and to change the course of events, without in

any degree suspending or altering those laws, by the continuous working of which the system of the creation is maintained.

Dr. Chalmers, in that chapter of his *Natural Theology*, which treats of a special Providence and the efficacy of prayer, has shown very clearly, in our opinion, in what manner the Almighty may respond to the prayers of the righteous, or interfere for any other purpose in the affairs of the world, without in the least disturbing the constancy of the so-called laws of nature. And, as we shall have frequent occasion to refer to his hypothesis, which will indeed be the basis of a great part of our reasonings on the subject, we think it well to state it here in as few words as possible. He supposes the Deity to interfere to alter the succession of events, whenever it seems good to His wisdom to do so, by acting on the most distant causes of things, which, though the whole course of nature is dependent on them, are hidden from human knowledge, and may well be supposed to be under His more immediate direction. As by touching one extremity of a chain, a motion may be communicated by means of the intervening links, to some very distant part of it, so may the Almighty make an alteration in the succession of the events, or in the phenomena of the universe, by the agency of those laws that are commonly called natural, and by

working on the first causes of things. Now this hypothesis appears to us to be amply sufficient to answer all objections that may be made, on philosophical grounds, against interpositions of Providence, in whatever manner we suppose the Almighty to have created and to govern the universe ; for all the phenomena of the material world, and to a great extent those of the moral world also, which, according to many, are included in the former, have, long prior to the recent discoveries in geology and zoology, been acknowledged to be ruled by certain fixed and immutable laws, and to be traceable to certain causes, which from their invariability are commonly called "natural." In the systems, to which we have so frequently had occasion to allude, these causes are supposed to be deducible from other causes, and to be dependent on a long series of intervening causes which connect them with the first Great Cause of all. It is merely in extending this chain of causation, that those recently promulgated systems differ from all former ones. Now, how great soever the number of links of this chain may be, it has been shown that the first Great Cause of all must be, not a principle, but a person who designs, contrives, and foresees, not an agent acting from necessity, but one who of his own free will, and for his own pleasure has created all things. And surely He, who by His

wisdom has laid the foundations of the world—who, before the generations of man were born, had formed them in the bowels of the earth,—can at any time so exercise his power on the first link of that chain of causes which connects everything with Himself, that any event that He wishes may be brought to pass by means of the intervening links of this chain, that is, through the agency of what are commonly called “natural causes.” The indefinite increase in the number of intervening links of this chain, though it remove us further from Him, throws no difficulty in the way of this explanation ; for the greater this number is shown to be, the greater must have been the power of Him who through them has made such manifestations of Himself, as we behold in the works of the universe : the further we are from the Almighty, the more cogent are the proofs of His wisdom afforded us by His works, exhibited as they are at such a distance from Himself. The prolongation of the chain of causation cannot increase the difficulty of interfering through it to Him who had originally worked by means of it. The power that was able to do the latter cannot be supposed to be incapable of the former. But the facility of His interfering so as to bring about events, apparently by natural means, becomes still more evident when we consider the probable distance from us of the

more remote causes of the phenomena with which we are conversant, and, that we have every reason to think that those causes that have come under our observation, and which comprehend all that we call "natural," constitute but a few links in the great chain. It has already been shown that He on whom this great chain is dependent, in whatever mode he formed it, may be continually present throughout the whole of that wonderful system of which He was the author; and may watch and preside over the working of every part of it. He may therefore at any time exercise His power anew on *any* one of the links of the great chain of causation, so as to bring about any results that He thinks proper. When this interference takes place on any of the links that have come under the observation of mankind, it is, in popular language, called a "miracle." Notwithstanding all that has been alleged against the credibility of miracles, it appears to us that philosophy can show no valid reason why He may not have occasionally interposed in this manner, for the purpose of manifesting His immediate presence, or of establishing the credit of His authorized messengers. But it must be allowed that the *frequent* repetition of acts of this sort would overthrow the order and regularity of nature, which seems to be necessary for the well-being of this part of the creation, and would destroy

all prudence and foresight on the part of mankind. It would seem indeed to be almost incompatible with our being in that state of probation in which we have reason to believe we are placed in this world by the Author of Nature. We should be therefore inclined, independent of experience, to suppose that He would never, except on extraordinary occasions, interfere in that part of the system of nature which has come under the observation of the human race; but philosophy can show no valid reason why he should not interfere in any part which, lying between them and Himself, is hidden from their perception. If it be alleged that the order and harmony of that part, though we see it not, may be as necessary for the general good, as that of our world is requisite for us; and that there may be beings placed above us in the scale of creation, and allowed to see further into the working of the system than we are, whose state requires that this order and harmony should be maintained, this would merely afford ground for supposing that He touched a still more remote link in the chain of causation, hidden from the view of others besides ourselves, when He wished to interfere in the affairs of this world. No allegation of this sort can afford the slightest presumption against His touching that link of the chain which immediately connects it with Him. Indeed, it may well be sup-



posed that He has imparted degrees of knowledge and powers of understanding to different orders of beings, varying according to the position in the scale of creation He has designed them to occupy, and that the opportunities they have of witnessing the more immediate acts of His power, and of comprehending His designs, may vary in proportion to the degree of knowledge that he has imparted to them. All such acts are as much interpositions of Providence as those that are commonly called "miracles," but they do not appear such to those beings whose faculties do not enable them to penetrate to the more hidden parts of the system of nature where the interposition takes place, the direct consequences of which appear to them to result entirely from natural causes. And to set aside the reasons, already alluded to, the doctrine of chances alone would lead us to think that to beings situated so far from the Almighty as we are supposed to be, to whom therefore a very small extent of the chain of causation which connects them with Him can be known, few of His interpositions can be manifest, and few of the events so brought about can appear "miracles."

As those who deny the existence of a special Providence, and throw ridicule on the notions of aught being effected by the prayers of men, are for the most part rigid materialists, we shall endea-

vous to explain our meaning by an illustration to which we think they cannot object. Let us, then, compare the world to a beautifully organized system of mechanism, the different parts of which act upon each other by means of certain mechanical agencies which connect them together. In this system we may suppose alterations similar to the formation of globes in space, and the processes of development, generation, and nutrition to take place, and that by these means in the course of time certain puppets are formed, whose motions are of course entirely regulated by the actions of the machine, and the mutual influences which through it they exert on each other. The position of the puppets in the piece of mechanism may be compared to that which materialist philosophers have assigned in the system of the universe to the human race, whose actions, passions, and desires are said to be governed by the laws of matter, as completely as the motions of any puppets are by wires and other mechanical contrivances. Such a system must not only have been contrived and devised, but must also be worked by some person who continually watches over and superintends every part of it. Surely it must be allowed that the author and worker of this system may, either by direct interference, or by touching some spring in the interior, or by exerting his power in that part

of it through which he originally set it in motion, and ordinarily continues to work it, change the position or the course of any of these puppets, without in any manner suspending or deranging the general working of the machine. How shallow, then, is the reasoning of those who, from the progressive system of the creation, and the regularity of Nature's laws, deny the possibility of the interference of the Deity.

We shall strengthen our case by another mechanical illustration. Let us suppose a clock endowed with the power of reasoning and thinking (a supposition which those who maintain that men are mere combinations of matter, and that their intellectual faculties are the mere results of such combinations, cannot object to as being absurd), and thus to argue: I wish the rate at which my hands go were altered; yet it would be folly in me to make my wish known to my Maker, for he can do nothing; their rate of going depends upon certain wheels in my interior, which depend on certain other wheels; and I know that he never interferes with any of these relations, and that, even if he were willing, he could not do so, without totally deranging, or possibly altogether destroying the works of which I am composed.

Although we know the conclusions derived from this line of argument to be erroneous, surely they

rest upon reasonings at least as plausible as the following sarcasms of a French philosopher: "Credulous men, show me what effect your practice of praying has? After so many centuries, during which you retain them or you alter them, what effect have your petitions had on the laws of nature? Has the sun more force? is the course of the seasons changed? is the earth more fruitful? are the people happier?" We trust that our argument, aided by the mechanical illustrations which we have made use of, will suffice to show, how, although the laws of nature have remained invariable, and the course of the seasons continues unchanged, nevertheless the earth may have become more fruitful and the people may become happier in consequence of the much-derided prayers and intercessions of credulous mortals.

In the above reasonings and illustrations we have considered each event to be dependent on only one chain of causation; some one of the links of which it would be necessary to touch in order to effect any change. But when we consider the numerous motives by which the conduct of each individual in the daily occurrences of life is influenced, and by which his fortune through life is affected, the very important events and changes which are sometimes brought about by apparently trivial causes, which indeed has been so often remarked that it has



go to B instead of A being, that velocity communicated by the new force so applied should be to the velocity with which it is moving in the direction PA, in the proportion of a straight line drawn from B, parallel to the direction of this new force to meet the line PA, to the distance between the point where the line so drawn meets the line PA, and the point where the body is at the time the new force is applied. If the new moving force fulfil this condition, it will cause the particle to move to B, in whatever direction it be applied, regard being had to the side from which it comes. Thus if the body be at P, and a new force be applied to it in the direction  $Pv_1$ , in order that this new force may make it move in the line PB, it must be to the force which first communicated motion to P, in the proportion of  $Bw_1$ , which is drawn parallel to  $Pv_1$ , to  $Pw_1$ . In the same manner if the new force had been in the direction  $Pv_2$ , it must be to the former one in the proportion of  $Bw_2$  to  $Pw_2$ . This condition is all that is required, in whatever part of the line PA the particle may be, at the time the new force is applied. Or the particle may be made to change its direction in the manner required by being made to move first in the line Pb, and afterwards in the direction bB. Thus it is evident that the problem as proposed by us admits of an infinite number of solutions. Now,

those who contend that the phenomena of the universe, including animal life, and human thoughts are merely the results of material organization, must allow that in the same manner, the course of things may be changed in an infinite number of methods, so as to bring about any event. For, according to them, a certain event taking place, means only a certain arrangement or disposition of certain particles of matter, or a certain motion being communicated to certain particles of matter. It is true that in the system of the universe, as it is supposed to be constituted, the forces which act simultaneously on any particle are so many and various, as also are the media through which any extraneous force may be applied without the appearance of a miracle being wrought, so as to cause a different arrangement of the particles to take place, or to communicate a different motion to any one of them, that it must be impossible for a being of finite capacity to say how a new force ought to be applied so as to produce the change that may be required; but to the omnipotent mind of the Creator this can present no more difficulty than the simplest problem in the composition of forces does to an ordinary mathematician. And when we call to mind the numerous forces that are continually acting on the mechanical part of man (whether this constitutes the whole man or not), "the innu-

“ merable progressions perpetually crossing one  
“ another of which nature and society is made up,”  
and which at the points of their intersection receive  
a new direction in consequence of the lateral impulse that has come upon them, we think that we shall not be deemed guilty of exaggeration, if we say that any event in the physical world may be brought to pass, or that the fortune or career of any individual or of any society may be changed in an infinite number of ways by what are commonly called natural causes. Thus, those who affirm that our life is a line which Nature orders us to describe on the face of the earth without being able to deviate from it one instant, must allow that its course may be made to undergo any required change in an infinite number of ways, in the same manner as that of the particle in the mathematical problem which we have chosen to illustrate our arguments. If the acts of the different members of the bodies politic which taken collectively form the history of nations be compared to the motions of the grains in a cloud of dust, it will in like manner be as easy to alter these acts as to communicate a fresh motion to any of these grains. And we have already shown how the Divine power may be exerted, so as to bring about an alteration by any of these natural causes, without the appearance of a miraculous interposition.



In all these discourses concerning the manner in which the Almighty may respond to the prayers of his creatures, we have hitherto taken into consideration only the mechanical part of the universe, as there are some among whom are to be found most of those who object, on philosophical grounds, to a special Providence and the efficacy of prayer, who deny that the human mind has any existence separate from and independent of that of matter. We trust that we have succeeded in explaining the possibility of the intervention of the Deity, by strictly mechanical means. But if it be conceded that the human mind, however closely and intimately it may for the present be allied with matter, however hidden and obscure its operation may be, does, nevertheless, exist independently of it; that though it be corrupted, degraded, and frequently subdued by this connection, it is, nevertheless, nearer to the Deity, and is under His more immediate control than any of that part of the material universe which has come under our observation; we are enabled to behold another and more direct and, it may be thought, an easier way for the interposition of the Almighty in the affairs of the world. Indeed, though we trust that we have shown satisfactorily that the Almighty may interfere in the physical part of the universe, without in the least violating the constancy of Nature's laws, we believe

that many well-wishers to religion will be found more ready to believe that He responds to prayer by working on the minds of men, than by making any special exercise of his power in the mechanical part of the universe, in any of the methods we have supposed; such is their reluctance to admit the interference of any extraordinary power in the working of any of the physical laws of Nature. And when we reflect how much the mind affects the body of each individual, how much the temper and disposition of every person in his ordinary intercourse with mankind, and more particularly at those critical moments which occur in the life of every mortal, may affect both his own fortune and that of others, we easily perceive how much the course of events may be altered by any impression made on the mind of any one individual, and how the Deity may respond to prayer by the special exercise of his power on the mind of one or more beings. Even irreligionists are willing to allow the physical effect of prayer on the mind of the suppliant; and they cannot deny that any impression produced, no matter how, on the mind of any person, must affect both his character and conduct, and must have some influence on the future career and destiny both of himself, and of those with whom he is connected. How often has the fate of a nation been decided by the temper and dispo-

sition of its rulers at some particular time? How many great and important events may be traced to some unaccountable caprice of a monarch? What is more common than to ascribe the happiness and prosperity of some countries, and the misery and wretchedness of others, to the character and dispositions of their inhabitants? Who has not felt how much his own career in life has been affected by his conduct and state of mind on particular occasions? Who, then, can say that many events may not have been caused by the immediate exercise of the power of the Almighty on the minds of certain individuals?

We shall proceed to give a few examples of the various modes in which, according to our hypothesis, the Almighty may interpose to alter the succession of events without violating the regularities of Nature. Let us suppose a person attacked with a disease which, in all human probability, must terminate fatally, but that He in whose hands are the issues of life and death, has been moved by the prayer of faith, and interposes to save the sick. For reasons that we have already explained, He does not choose to do this in what is commonly called a miraculous manner, that is, He does not choose to violate any of those laws affecting human physiology which have come under the recent observation of man. To omit the other evils that would

result from his acting in this manner, one of its most obvious consequences would be to destroy all certainty in the science of medicine, and to withdraw all inducement to men to study the art of healing, which has conferred such inestimable benefits on the human race. But the most skilful physicians are the most ready to allow that much of the science which they profess is hidden from the knowledge of man, and that there must be a long chain of antecedent causes affecting the economy of the human frame, the results only of which are known to them. We believe that this is made still more apparent by the recent advances in the science of physiology. Therefore none of them can affirm that the hand of the Almighty has not been at work somewhere in this chain of antecedents, so as to cause some change to take place in the patient which will make his disease to yield to the ordinary remedies. The state of the surrounding atmosphere, the receipt of joyful or sad intelligence, even the most trivial occurrences, such as the shutting of a window, or clapping of a door, may produce a considerable effect on the health of the individual at the crisis of his disease, in some of which the hand of the Almighty may have been specially exercised with a beneficent intention. It is true that the state of the atmosphere depends upon the exhalations from the surrounding country, the degree of heat to which it

is subjected, and other causes, as has been proved with great certainty in the sciences of pneumatics and chemistry. But there is a certain point where the knowledge that these sciences afford terminates, beyond which all is mystery, wherein an interposition of the Almighty power might so effect the primal causes on which the state of the atmosphere is by them shown to depend, as to bring about the change necessary for the recovery of the patient. In like manner those trivial events which have a salutary effect on the mind and health of the sufferer, may have been brought about by the special interposition of the Almighty, though the interposition which he designed to alter the succession of events may have taken place in that part of the creation which is concealed from the eye of man. His life may also be saved by an unexpected visit from a skilful physician, or by the absence of an unskilful one whom he was wont on ordinary occasions to consult, or by many of those incidental occurrences in which, though they are in common conversation ascribed to chance, piety may recognise the hand of the Almighty. It would be still more easy to point out various manners in which the exercise of His power merely on the mental world might restore the sick man to health. Cheerfulness, hope, and confidence will often carry an invalid through the most alarming crisis. Unwonted activity and alacrity of mind on the part of his friends may be

the chief causes of his recovery ; even the temper and frame of mind of the physician, which are more or less variable in all individuals, may powerfully affect his skill in devising remedies. Who, then, can say that the sick man may not have been saved by a special interposition of Providence having taken place either in the material or the mental world ?

We shall now consider some of the cases referred to in the above quotations from the writings of M. Volney. In one place he asks, who ever heard of a land being made more fruitful by the prayers of its inhabitants ? Among the principal causes effecting the fertility of a land are favourable seasons and the industry and skill of the cultivators. It is true that all the attendant phenomena of the former are brought about by the regular laws of meteorology ; but any one who has attentively considered what we have already said on this subject, will easily understand how the Deity may predispose antecedent causes, so that in virtue of these very laws, which are such a stumbling-block to many, he makes the sun to shine, and the latter and the former rain to come in their due seasons, and the earth to yield her increase. As to the degree in which the skill and industry of the cultivators contribute to the fertility of the land, we should desire no better witness than M. Volney. He travelled

through many countries, with the history of which he was well acquainted. He has seen or been in the immediate vicinity of lands which, when cultivated by men of skill and industry, were the most fertile in the East, and supplied all the surrounding states with provisions, in which at present "gladness is taken away, and joy out of the  
"plentiful field, where the hay is withered away,  
"the grass faileth, and there is no green thing."  
The extraordinary fertility of these countries in ancient times was caused by irrigation through artificial canals, which system might have been suggested to some of the former inhabitants by observing how much the soil of Egypt was enriched by the periodical overflowings of the Nile. Some event totally unconnected with agriculture might have originally induced one of the inhabitants to visit a land, which might have furnished to him the idea of a process so beneficial to his native soil, or it might have been suggested to him by an accident apparently quite as trivial, as that which led Newton to discover the law of gravitation. Philosophy can show no valid reason against the occurrence of any of these events, which may have had such an important influence on the fertility of the land, though at first sight they have seemed to have nothing to do with it, having been brought about by a special interference of the Almighty in

any of the methods we have above supposed. Or, without interfering in any part of the physical creation, might He not have quickened the minds of some to profit by their own experience and observations, and induce them to apply their knowledge so acquired to increasing the fertility of their country? Many and various are the ways by which He might have accomplished His purpose without any appearance of a miracle.

But how can we express our surprise at a philosopher like M. Volney asking what nation was ever made better or happier by its prayers? Doubtless, M. Volney, who made prayer and the Christian religion such a special object of his ridicule, was well acquainted with the writings on which that religion was founded, and the prayers made use of in the public assemblies of its disciples. In the former he must have read, "God is a spirit, and requires those who worship Him to do so in spirit and in truth;" and he has probably either read or heard the form of prayer commonly called the Litany. And can M. Volney suppose that all, or even the majority of the inhabitants of any country could join in offering up these petitions with spirit and with truth, which would of course imply on their part an earnest wish for their fulfilment, and a determination to do all in their power to aid in bringing them to pass, and not become



both better and happier? He surely will not deny that prayer must exercise some sort of reflux influence on the minds of the petitioners, and that the reflux influence, which *such* prayers must exert on those that sincerely join in them, must have the most beneficial effect. It would not be difficult to point out the many miseries that his countrymen might have avoided, if they had all *earnestly* prayed to be delivered "from envy, hatred, malice, and  
" all uncharitableness; from sedition, privy conspiracy, and rebellion; from battle and murder; and  
" that it might please the Almighty to give to all  
" nations, unity, peace, and concord." It will readily be acknowledged, that if all our countrymen were to join "with spirit and with truth" in offering up the petitions contained in the prayer appointed to be read when the High Court of Parliament is sitting, that each of them would, as far as in him lay, endeavour to aid in choosing the best and ablest men as legislators. We should then hear nothing of bribery on the part of the candidates, and corruption on the part of the electors, of reckless ambition or violent party spirit in those to whom the direction of the affairs of the nation is committed. It is needless to expatiate on the effect that such a state of things would have on the general happiness and prosperity of a country. Indeed, all who have given any

consideration to this subject, will at once admit the soundness of the example chosen by Bishop Butler to illustrate the happy tendency of virtue, even in this world, wherein he expresses his conviction, that if all the individuals of any nation were thoroughly imbued with the love of virtue and equity, it must, both in internal happiness and external prosperity, surpass all other nations of the earth. Of such a nation all others would gradually become, either the subjects or the allies, and in its history we might expect to see the literal fulfilment of the prophecies: "Its dominion shall extend from one  
" end of the earth to the other, and in its reign  
" shall be abundance of peace, as long as the moon  
" endureth." We believe that few, even of those who doubt the divine origin of the Mosaic dispensation, will deny that the great temporal prosperity promised to the Jews, as a reward for their obedience, would have been the natural consequence of their continuing to observe, in spirit as well as in letter, the laws and ordinances given to them by their great deliverer. Those who have followed us through our dissertations on this subject, will readily acquit us of any design to insinuate, that the Almighty answers prayer *merely* by a certain law, which causes a reflux influence to take place in the mind of the petitioner, proportioned to his sincerity and earnestness in asking. We have

before expressed our opinion, that any such reflux influence must be regarded as one of the many proofs that we possess of the benevolent design of the Almighty, in framing the general scheme of the Creation, and that He both can and does answer prayer by special interpositions of His power. But we were desirous of showing that M. Volney, while he was so intent upon throwing ridicule on the efficacy of prayer, so strongly recommended in the Christian revelations, had shown himself unmindful even of the commonest principles of rational philosophy.

A strange objection has been made against men praying to the Almighty Creator upon the following grounds:—If the world be under the government of an all-benevolent God, why should its inhabitants make known their requests unto One, who would of His own accord give unto each of them the things that are good for him? And if both the physical and moral phenomena of the world, the actions and passions of men, the succession of events which affect the aggregate bodies of men, which we call history, as well as those which form the fortune of any one individual, are all the results of some primordial arrangement of matter, made by a Being of infinite wisdom, power, and benevolence, does not His allowing Himself to be in any way moved by the prayer of His people to make any special exercise of His

power, imply some defect in the original design? To this we reply, that we have every reason to believe, as we intend hereafter to show, that His intention in placing men in this world was to make them pass through a state of probation? This probably is a part of the universal plan devised by Him, ere the foundations of the world were laid. And if a state of probation has been designed for man, is it more likely that it should have been ordained that what was good and expedient for him should be given to him, on his seeking after it, than that it should be given to him independent of any effort on his part? How can we suppose such a state in which it was ordained that every one placed therein should obtain all that was expedient for him, without his in any way seeking to obtain it? Would not such a constitution of things cause carelessness and indifference to future welfare, both in this world and in the world to come? Does not the Deity show his wisdom in promising His special favours only to those who seek them with earnestness and sincerity; and so engendering habits of serious thought and calm reflection, without which fervent prayer is impossible, and promoting feelings of dependence on Him, and the practice of looking up to Him on all occasions, which must be so highly beneficial to beings in a state of probation? The bestowing special favours on those who seek them

and who do not, alike, would be almost encouraging that pride, frowardness, and indifference to religious matters, to which all men are too prone ; and as the majority of men seem to be so circumstanced, that of themselves they can do little, perhaps there is no one method in which they can better show their earnest desire to do the will of the Almighty, and evince their gratitude to their Maker and Preserver, than by frequent and earnest prayer.

Under what circumstances, and to what extent men may pray concerning matters that appear to concern only their temporal welfare, is a question that must have presented itself to the consideration of most sober and reflecting Christians. For both Scripture and reason warrant us in thinking that there are occasions on which men may make mention of their hopes and their desires concerning the affairs of this world in their prayers to the Almighty. This practice appears to be sanctioned by the examples of the Apostles and the early Christians, of which we may take the following instances :—In one of St. Paul's epistles we find the words, " Night " and day praying that we may see your face," and in another place, he says, " For this I besought " the Lord thrice." We read also that the Church prayed for St. Peter, when he was in prison. Since then prayers for temporal bless-

ings are acceptable to the Almighty, and, let us hope, efficacious with Him also, it behoves men seriously to consider in what manner they can best avail themselves of this inestimable privilege, and to what restrictions they should subject themselves in so doing. For no reasonable being, however devout he may be, and whatever reliance he may have in the goodness and in the mercy of the Almighty, can expect that everything that he may possibly ask for in his prayers shall be granted to him ; for, if this were the case, religious men might altogether exempt themselves from the trials and sorrows which are necessary to the probationary state in which they are placed, and frail, perishable, short-sighted mortals might direct the course of the events in which they themselves were concerned, in the manner that seemed best to their own limited judgment. It would also be highly presumptuous in any to suppose, that the laws of Nature should be suspended or altered for their special benefit, though this consideration should not prevent them praying for events that may seem difficult or almost impossible of accomplishment, as they know not in what manner the Almighty may bring them about by secondary causes. A devout Christian ought not to make worldly honours and distinctions the object of his prayers ; for, as these things by their very nature can be attained only

by a few, he who prays for them, prays that more favour should be extended to him than to others, which would be highly presumptuous in any one, and quite repugnant to the spirit of meekness and humility, so strongly enjoined by the Christian religion. It was for making an unbecoming and presumptuous request of this sort that the mother of James and John was rebuked by our Lord, when, in reply to her request, that one of her sons should sit on His right hand, and another on His left, He said unto her, "Thou knowest not what thou askest for." And we do not think that a devout Christian, who, in his communion with his Maker, endeavours to elevate his mind above the pomps and vanities of the world, will make any prayer for the attainment of anything that can serve merely to gratify his vanity, or to minister to his pleasure. Indeed, the wisest of mortals are so short-sighted, and they know so little what is really conducive to their temporal welfare, far less to what is profitable for their eternal interests, that we should be well nigh tempted to reply in the affirmative to the question of the Roman satirist, "Shall men, then, pray for nothing?" However, as the Almighty has so placed men in this world, that even the most devout and recluse are forced to take some part in its affairs, and must be in some degree

interested in its transactions, and as a life of retirement and solitude is by no means enjoined to all, so that the course of conduct and happiness of every person to a certain extent, and of some to a very great degree, must be influenced by external events, it seems unreasonable to think that men should never make known their wishes or their desires concerning the affairs of the world to their Heavenly Father. But there is this essential difference to be observed concerning the temporal and spiritual blessings that are to be made the objects of our prayers, namely, that, in asking for the latter, we can never err, or ask what is not for our real good, which we are extremely liable to do in praying for the former. And although there are some requests so pious and so natural, that a Christian can scarcely err in making them the subjects of his prayers, nevertheless it appears to us, that in general mortals would act far wiser, in praying that the Almighty would guide them by His wisdom in their actions and intentions, and order all things for them as He thought best, than ask for particular objects and events, the ultimate consequences of which they are unable to foresee. As too much thought and anxiety concerning the affairs of this world is expressly forbidden to those who wish to attain the kingdom of God and His righteousness, in no case ought prayers for worldly prosperity to



form any considerable portion of the devotions of a Christian. Perhaps no better rule for guiding a Christian in his prayers to the Almighty can be laid down, than that expressed in the injunction of St. Paul to the Philippians, "Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." The making known our requests to God in everything seems such a natural result of our putting our trust in Him, that we can scarcely suppose it to be His wish that we should not do so. And as no serious-minded Christian would presume to mention his requests in his prayers to the Almighty without having duly pondered on their nature, and weighed his own motives in making them; so he who in this manner makes known his wishes concerning everything to the Almighty, cannot fail to exercise a very salutary control over his own life and actions. Many desires and pursuits, which have a tendency to lead to vice, when modified and controlled, so that a man may conscientiously ask the blessing of the Almighty upon them, become salutary incentives to a virtuous series of actions. No course of life can be more strongly condemned than that of one who is entirely absorbed in the pursuit of money-making,—who rises up early, goes to bed late, and eats the bread of carefulness,—who de-

frauds the poor of their earnings, and his servants of their wages, that he may lay up for himself treasure upon earth; and it would be presumptuous for any man engaged in such a course of life to ask the Almighty to bless his endeavours. The desire of making a fair provision for oneself and one's family, even that of improving one's condition in life, is so natural, and, when duly controlled, is so highly beneficial to society, that it can scarcely be deemed wrong in men to pray for the Almighty's blessing on the accomplishment of objects such as these. But as a devout Christian, before he would dare to pray the Almighty to prosper the work of his hands, would bear in mind that, where his treasure is, there must his heart be also, and would therefore consider every earthly blessing second to the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and would, in the pursuit of his objects, use no means on which he could not unhesitatingly ask God's blessing, the desire to which we have alluded, which, if unrestrained, might, perhaps, have degenerated into avarice, becomes in the Christian who makes known his wishes to the Almighty, steady industry and frugality, virtues which, perhaps, more than any others, conduce to the well-being of society. Ambition, in the sense in which it is generally understood, leads to the commission of many errors, and is often the cause of much unhappiness to those

who are under its influence, and productive of no small amount of mischief to the world. The desire of being useful in one's generation, and of making the most of the talents committed to one's charge, is surely above all others commendable, and may be deemed to be acceptable to the Deity; yet these two affections of the human mind are so nearly allied, that the former will be modelled into the latter, in one who is in the habit of communicating all his thoughts and desires to his Maker. If all those who have acquired unto themselves names, had been in the habit of applying this salutary test to their desires, and to the motives of their conduct, how different, how infinitely more useful, and, perhaps, not less celebrated, would have been the careers of many whom history has made known to us. By pondering over his actions in this manner, Napoleon Bonaparte might have become another Washington; Pope Leo the Tenth might have shone forth through Christendom, as Dr. Arnold did in England; many an ambitious place-hunter might have acquired the fair fame of a Wilberforce; the author of "Don Juan," might have been the Milton of the nineteenth century.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### PROBABLE PURPOSE OF THE CREATION OF THE HUMAN RACE.

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THE pleasures and advantages peculiar to the study of Natural Theology have been expatiated on by Lord Brougham in his introduction to Paley's work on this subject. As He of whose works it professes to treat, and whose designs it endeavours to unfold, is everywhere, it must, beheld merely in a scientific view, contain many things attractive to the student of every branch of Natural Philosophy, as a proof of which we may appeal to the seven Bridgewater Treatises, each of which, viewed merely as a treatise on that science by which its author has undertaken to illustrate the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Almighty, contains matter of the greatest interest; which must of course be enhanced by the consideration, that each

science is now treated of in its most dignified aspect, and rendered subservient to the highest purpose ; it helps the most superficial observer to find sermons in stones, and good in everything, to say nothing of the unmeasureable importance it is to every man to find undoubted proofs of the existence of One, whom he is to thank for his creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life, and of the consolation he must derive from being able to reflect, in the midst of his troubles and perplexities, that all things have been ordered and contrived by a Being of infinite power and goodness, in whom he may at all times put his trust. It surely, then, has claims to the attention of the ordinary herd of mankind, as well as the philosophic few, and merits the consideration of the staunchest believer in the Christian religion, as well as that of the sceptic and the despiser of all revelation. But perhaps the greatest recommendation that it possesses is, that it tends in some degree to throw light upon the conjectures that have been made concerning the purpose and general object of the existence of man in his present habitation. The solution of the question "*Quid sumus et quidnam victuri gignimur?*" has perplexed many of the wisest of the sons of earth, and we believe that there are few even of the thoughtless and illiterate, of the hardest working drudges

among the lower, or of the most trivial and dissipated among the upper classes of society, who have not at some time or other bestowed a thought upon a subject of such transcendent importance. To the Christian it will be peculiarly gratifying, if, in the explanation of it offered in this science, he find any additional confirmation of the truth of that religion, which is his delight and happiness; to the Infidel it must possess attractions, as tending to throw some gleams of the light of nature on a subject, the revealed elucidation of which he despises. We believe, that the success which has attended so many false religions among mankind, may be attributed in no small degree to their anxiety to find, and their determination to adhere to any system which professes to throw light on this matter.

From the evidences of design that have been discerned throughout the whole of the creation, it may safely be inferred that every thing that is, has been made to serve some definite end or purpose. It is well known that this view of the works of the creation led to one of the most brilliant discoveries in physical science. And surely this inference may be extended with the same certainty, to the psychological as well as to the physical world.

In the "Vestiges" we find it stated, "That enjoyment is the proper attendant of the animal existence is irresistibly pressed upon us by all that

“ we experience ;” and so far, but no farther, as the meaning of the word animal is, in popular language, allowed to extend, this appears to us to be correct. To make this universe, the workmanship of His hands, the earth, the air, the water, all teem with delighted existence, is an object well worthy of the Being whose nature and attributes we have been considering, and is in perfect unison with the notions of His benevolence, that are formed from the study of Natural Theology. This appears to be a satisfactory explanation of the general purpose and design of the brute creation. In them we are unable to discover aught which can be deemed superfluous for this end, or any qualities which would appear to fit them for anything beyond present enjoyment in their respective spheres.

But has man no qualities which appear to be given to him for some ulterior purpose, and which would seem to be thrown away upon him, if he were intended merely to live and to enjoy himself upon earth ? It has been said, certainly, that his mental powers differ from those of the brutes only in “degree.” Now, as a considerable latitude may be allowed to the interpretation of the word “degree,” we will not attempt to dispute this assertion ; but if it is only in “degree” that they differ, it must be allowed to be in a degree so great as to fit them for ends and purposes totally different. The term may be

applied with greater propriety to the difference between the mental powers of two individuals, than to that between the reasoning faculties of man and brute. The mental powers of Newton and Cuvier may be said to have differed in degree only from those of the most illiterate savages, but nobody can deny that the former were qualified for ends and purposes totally different from those for which the latter are adapted. The degree in which the minds of men of very ordinary faculties excel those of the most sagacious of the brute creation is far greater than this. It has been said, indeed, that man has sprung from some animal of an inferior grade, whose parentage may be traced, through a series of animals, to the lowest class of creature that can be said to enjoy animal life, which must have had its origin in some chemico-electric operation of nature. But, if this be the case, which we think, is, as yet at least, far from being satisfactorily demonstrated, it is not less extraordinary that passive and inert matter should thus become a living creature, from which different species of animals endowed with volition and capacities of enjoyment in their respective spheres should descend, than, that an animal, fitted only for enjoyment in the present world, should produce a rational creature evidently destined for something higher than mere present gratification. The tran-



sition from unorganized matter to life, or from vegetable to animal life, is not more startling than that from mere animal to spiritual life.

“ Man has various instincts and principles of action such as brute creatures have, some leading most directly and immediately to the good of the community, and some most directly to private good. But he has several, which the brutes have not, particularly reflection or conscience, and approbation of some actions with disapprobation of others\*.”

“ The beast lives his animal life to enjoy himself. He enjoys himself in order to preserve his animal life. He lives to-day to live again to-morrow. He is happy to-day to be happy again to-morrow. But the happiness which he enjoys is of one kind, and precarious ; it is exposed to chance and accident, and consists merely in sensation. Man also lives an animal life, and enjoys its pleasures and suffers its pains. But to what purpose ? He enjoys and suffers that he may preserve his animal life ; he preserves his animal life that he may be able longer to live his spiritual life. In this case the means differ from the end ; in the former the means and the end seem to coincide. This is one of the lines of separation between man and beast†.”

\* Preface to Butler's Sermons.

† Schiller.

In no animal are the different ages of life so strongly marked as in man. Brutes vary but little from the time they attain their full strength, till their bodily powers become affected by age. Few men are the same at any period of life that they were ten years previously. There is much in the constitution of man, and the changes which it undergoes, which seems designed to remind him that every year brings him nearer to the end of his earthly pilgrimage. The manner in which the human mind continues to improve, long after the bodily powers have begun to deteriorate, shows that mere animal enjoyment cannot be meant to be the chief end of his existence.

In the human child we behold little to elevate him above the young of the brute creation. Indeed, he is inferior to them in some respects, as he possesses but few of the instincts which are given to them. Pain makes him cry, though he knows not whence it arises. In his boyhood and early youth he seeks chiefly after pleasure and amusement. His powers are called forth and exercised in his endeavours to gratify his natural inclinations. These are, to a great extent, the same as those which employ the faculties of the brute creation. But in none of the brutes are so many means necessary to the accomplishment of an end as in man. The very complexity of these means calls

forth his reasoning powers, and these powers remain in their full force and activity, and the exercise of them continues to be a source of pleasure, long after the objects which first called them forth have ceased to attract\*. Man soon discovers that he was not made for these things alone. He soon feels that all these are vanity and vexation of spirit.

The fear of death and vague apprehensions of a future state are common to all. These feelings are not confined to the upper classes who, being exempt from toil, have leisure for reflection, nor even to civilized nations. The fondness with which the poor in all countries, and the most barbarous nations in particular, cling to a religion of some sort, shows it to be common to all mankind. "Il faut aux hommes une religion†," is the saying of a philosopher who himself disbelieved in all revealed religions. Notions of right and wrong are common to all. The Gentiles, who have not a law, are unto themselves a law. "There exist, even in the remotest tracts of Paganism, such vestiges of light, as, when collected together, form a code or directory of moral conduct; there are still to be found among them the fragments of a law, which they never follow but with an

\* Schiller.

† Voltaire.

“approving conscience, and never violate but with “an opposing remonstrance\*.” We are unable to find any indications whatever of these qualities among the members of the brute creation. They appear to have no fear of death or uneasiness as to what is to become of them afterwards. They have no notions of merit or demerit, except as connected with immediate reward or punishment.

For what purpose, then, are we to suppose that these powers of reasoning, these faculties of discerning between right and wrong, these aspirations after something more than we see and experience, are given to us? Are they indications of any design on the part of the Creator, or must we regard them alone among His manifold works, as a superfluous addition coming from Him, given to man for no ulterior purpose or end? Indeed, if they are not the former, they are worse than superfluous. Intellectual enjoyments can be a source of pleasure to but very few among the mass of created beings. By those even who have leisure and taste for them, though they may seem more satisfactory and more enduring than mere corporeal pleasures, they are found eventually to be of the same fleeting nature as the latter. We believe that most who have expected to find in them an

\* Chalmers.

unfailing pleasure, will be ready to exclaim, in the words of the wise man, "I turned myself in my heart to behold wisdom, madness, and folly; I said this also is vanity."

Again, with regard to the faculty whereby man approves of some actions and disapproves of others, it is an opinion universally entertained that, in the course of time, virtue will meet with its due reward in this world. But we sometimes behold men suffer death, as the immediate consequence of their virtuous deeds, and good actions are often the causes of temporary suffering and misfortune, so that it may be doubted, whether the majority of virtuous men remain in this state of existence sufficiently long to meet the reward due to their character and actions. Thus, looking to this world alone, this faculty must be a frequent source of disappointment and regret to the best and most virtuous of the species.

If man is intended merely to enjoy himself here below, like the beasts, to die as they die, and to be no more heard of, the fear of death and the vague apprehensions of a future state must be regarded as great drawbacks to the pleasures of his existence, in the bestowment of which the benevolence of the Creator, so conspicuous in the arrangements made for the happiness of other animals, would appear to have failed. We cannot, then, believe

that He who has created nothing superfluous, whose goodness becomes more apparent, the more the plans of the creation are unfolded, has imparted to man all these sensations that in this life contribute but little to his enjoyment, and are too often a source of disappointment and regret to him, if He had no ulterior end or purpose in view.

If we admit the hypothesis that the general purport and object of man's being placed in this world is that he should pass through a state of probation, to qualify him for another life, we shall at once see a fit reason why he should have been endowed with the constitution, and gifted with the qualities to which we have adverted. Moreover, we shall then be able to explain many of the seeming anomalies of life, and answer many of the objections that have been raised therefrom against the goodness and the justice of the Deity.

The nature of a state of probation presupposes the possibility of some failing to obtain the rewards, or to avoid the punishments, that are to be awarded according to their conduct while in that state. In this we behold certainly some explanation of the reason why evil has been permitted to exist. Without evil there could have been no temptation to err, no trial of virtue; in short, without some admixture of it, a state of probation would have been impossible.

The want of universality in any revelation, and the obscurity which appears to some to hang over the evidence of the authenticity of the only one which can be deemed worthy of any consideration, has sometimes been objected to as hard to reconcile with the goodness of the Almighty. With respect to the former, namely, the want of universality of any one religion, reason and revelation alike teach us that in the end all shall be equitably dealt with, according to the advantages and the degrees of light that have been accorded to them in this world; that although those to whom the oracles of God have been committed, have much advantage, *i. e.* are placed in a position where they can obtain higher rewards, yet that, in the end, those who are without the law shall be judged without the law, while those who are under the law shall be judged by the law. Concerning the want of stronger evidence of the authenticity of the Christian religion, the hypothesis of man's being placed in this world for the purpose of passing through a state of probation, and liable to fall into divers temptations, must at once remove any stumbling-block that may have arisen therefrom. There is no precept, the truth of which can be more easily proved by the arguments based on the light of nature, than that which is contained in the New Testament:—"Whosoever cometh to me not as a

“ little child, the same is not fit for the kingdom  
“ of heaven.” In knowledge and understanding  
the wisest of men are but as children before God.  
Their wisdom is more insignificant before Him,  
than is that of the infant before the full-grown  
man. Whosoever, then, would seek to know His  
will, must do it with all humility and humbleness  
of mind, as behoves a frail creature like man, when  
brought into relation with the Maker of heaven  
and earth. The history of Cornelius the Centurion,  
recorded in the 10th chapter of the Acts, affords  
us a beautiful example of the manner in which a  
truly devout man should seek to know the will of  
his Maker. The manner in which the proud spirit  
of man is liable to be inflated by pride, vain glory,  
and intellectual vanity, need not be dilated on. A  
little knowledge makes a man overwise in his own  
conceit. Those who have read the writings of the  
principal adversaries of Christianity, whatever they  
may think of the arguments contained therein,  
must allow that they furnish a remarkable illus-  
tration of the truth of the above proverb. It is  
said that the Almighty is found of all them that seek  
Him ; and the opinion of many of the most learned  
philosophers, that we have sufficient evidence to  
remove from the mind of any unprejudiced inquirer  
all doubt concerning the Divine origin of the Chris-  
tian revelation, is in accordance with this declaration.



In a state of probation, men are beset by various temptations and encompassed by dangers ; they are as liable to fall into error in forming their opinions, as they are to do wrong in their actions ; the former they often do through pride and vain glory, the latter through selfishness or passion. The tendencies to the former must be corrected and subdued as much as the latter. In the affairs of this world men are not wont to judge leniently of those who commit errors through presumption, or an overweening self-confidence ; yet they impugn the justice of the Almighty, because these dispositions may lead them to errors dangerous to their future welfare. With the degree of evidence of the Divine revelations that we possess at present, the humility of man is put to a much more trying test in seeking the truth, than if the divine revelations had been written in the skies. It would be out of place for us, in an essay like the present, to give our reasons for thinking that the evidence we possess of the authenticity of the Christian religion is sufficient to convince those who, with a meek heart and due reverence, seek to investigate it. Concerning this let every one who believes in the existence of an Almighty Creator, use his own judgment, always recollecting that, if he rejects it, he may have to give an account of his reasons for doing so, not as he would when conversing

with his brother man, or in making a display of his learning, or mayhap of his wit and powers of sarcasm and of argument in a book, but naked before Him, unto "whom all hearts are open, all "desires are known, and from whom no secrets "are hid." But we would here make a remark concerning the degree of evidence that ought to suffice to guide a man in his belief as influencing his practice and his conduct through life. Dr. Chalmers, in his work on Natural Theology, has shown clearly that he who cannot positively disprove the existence of a God, is bound by every moral obligation, and by a due regard to his own interests, to act as if he were certainly convinced of His existence, and that he cannot complain of being hardly dealt with, if he is punished as guilty of gross ingratitude for acting otherwise. It is easy to show by the same arguments that the theist is bound to act in the same manner in seeking to know the revealed will of the Almighty. The transition from scepticism to a practical belief in Christianity, will take place in the same manner, and for the same reasons, as that from atheism to a practical belief in the existence of a God. He who does not disbelieve in this existence, and who has made up his mind to live as if he were thoroughly convinced thereof, will obey the slightest indication of any revelation, the authenticity of

which he is not able to disprove. Vain is the objection which may be raised against this assertion, by asking if man would be bound to commit an immoral or unjust act if commanded therein; for the immorality or injustice of an action would at once show that it could not have been ordered by Him, whose existence we hold to have been proved by Natural Theology, and would upset all pretence to Divine authority in the revelation by which it was commanded. The man who in this world has no light from revelation may be compared to a traveller who has lost his way in a desert country, or a mariner tossed to and fro in an unknown sea; would not the former eagerly hail the appearance of any guide who would undertake to give him any information concerning his route? would not the latter be delighted at the distant prospect of a harbour, whither he might steer his shattered barque? Like as the sudden appearance of light to people wandering in the dark, is the Christian revelation to those who were formerly going through life's pilgrimage without any comfort in this world, or any hope for the next. Woe to them who refuse to be guided by this light, because they think that it ought to be brighter. The folly of such has been with great propriety compared by a French philosopher to that of a person who makes a wager by which he may lose, but cannot possibly

win; the inequality of which is more conspicuous, when we consider the great disproportion between the value of a man's soul and that of all the world has to give.

These reflexions appear to us to contain a satisfactory answer to those who contend that the want of universality in any revelation, and the supposed deficiency in the proofs of its authenticity, must either show the religion itself to be an imposture, or imply a want of benevolence on the part of the Author of Nature. Touching this subject, there is one thing of which all men ought to feel assured, that whatever degree of difficulty there may appear to them to be in distinguishing between a Divine revelation, and the numerous impositions and false religions, with which the world abounds, whatever they may think of the manner in which the religion that seems most likely to be of divine origin has come to them, whatever uncertainty there may be about the authorship of some of its books, or whatever obscurity may arise from disputed passages and various readings therein, all has been purposely permitted to exist. For no reasonable man can believe that the Being, in the minutest of whose works design is evident, that He who feeds the ravens and providently caters for the sparrows, that He whose wisdom and foresight are discernible in the prehensory organs of

the polype, in the foot of the horse, and in the wing of the bat, should have neglected to bestow the same care upon a matter of the greatest importance to creatures who are of infinitely more value than any of these. Let man, then, be assured that nothing that regards revelation has been left to chance; that all that relates to it is the result of special design and foresight on the part of the Maker of Heaven and Earth. Whether the object and end of this design are such as we have ventured to suggest, let the impartial reader judge.

Viewing human existence in this light, we are unable to see anything difficult to reconcile with the goodness of the Deity in the common doom of all mankind. A state of probation must terminate at some time or other—the event by which it is terminated is called death; of the nature of this event, despite of the terror with which our imaginations have invested it, we know nothing. We think that the fear with which men are wont to regard it arises from two causes: a sort of innate horror of the dissolution of the body of which we are unable to give any account; but which, as we shall presently see, has been implanted in us by nature for a wise purpose; and our actual ignorance of the nature of the event, connected with the fear of the judgment that may follow it, is the cause of the vague

apprehensions, and the gloomy forebodings, with which we are wont to regard it. We see valid reasons for the existence of both, when they are viewed in connexion with the circumstances of our probation, and the evidence which we possess of the authenticity of the Christian revelation. All that we have said concerning the nature of this evidence applies with equal force to the uncertainty in which we are left concerning our state immediately after death. If the judgment of the departed were to take place in presence of the living, the effect would be the same as if the evidence of our religion were written in the skies, and the patience and faith of the righteous would not be put to the same test, as they are under the present order of things. The facility of concealing our thoughts, and sometimes even our deeds, under the hope that they may never be detected, puts the sincerity of our virtue to a severe ordeal. The kingdom of heaven, that is, the moral government of the Almighty, has frequently been compared by the Founder of our religion to a king who went to a far country, and left various duties entrusted to his servants during his absence. If after death the secrets of all men were revealed and made known in the presence of the living, as they must have been, if judgment took place in their presence, there would be but little temptation to hypocrisy, and little trial of the truth-

fulness of the just. The temptation of sinning in secret is one of the severest trials to which our virtue is exposed. If this temptation did not exist, the righteousness of the just might not excel that of many unprincipled men who abstain from crime from the terror of the law. The Almighty has thus been pleased to try the obedience of his creatures by concealing from their view all that takes place beyond the grave. In this manner is their faith tried, strengthened, and improved, and their virtue will eventually be made manifest to all.

With respect to the dissolution of the body, and the instinctive horror with which it is regarded, there is every reason to believe that the corporeal nature of man must undergo a total change to fit him for the state in which he is destined to live, after his earthly pilgrimage and its trials are over. Some such event then may be absolutely necessary, and let us hope that it will be to many the entrance into a happier and higher state of existence. "That which is sown, except it die first, how can it be quickened?" In the circumstance of the dissolution of the body being looked upon with fear and trembling by the majority of men, we can discern a signal manifestation of the design of an all-wise Providence; for, without this salutary dread of death, we cannot but think that some, when afflicted, distressed, or oppressed by difficul-

ties or dangers, would make use of any means that lay in their power of going to the place where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest; and we believe that there are periods in the lives of most, when, if this instinctive terror did not exist, they would not undergo much labour, or take much trouble, to prolong their existence. Perhaps the fear of death may be necessary to make the weary submit to the toil necessary for their very existence. Here, then, we see the method which the Almighty has chosen to make men remain in this state of probation, and to undergo the trials allotted to them therein, until it pleases Him to relieve them from it; it would be difficult to conceive a state in which some such provision did not exist. In such a state the Almighty must either have deprived man of the means of taking away life, or have tried his obedience by the temptation of committing suicide, in addition to those by which he is already beset. Surely no one can desire that such had been the constitution of Nature. Moreover, we have good reasons for believing, that there is nothing really to be feared in the dissolution of the body, when it is divested of those imaginary terrors, which appear to have been planted in man for wise purposes. Judging from facts of which we have certain knowledge, it seems to be a part of the plan of the Almighty



that man should not be subjected to any suffering that is not in the end positively beneficial. We have a remarkable instance of the providence of His goodness in this respect in the physical constitution of the body. We know that the sensitiveness of the skin, and the pain occasionally arising therefrom, which might, to a superficial inquirer, appear a positive evil, has been given to man to protect his body from accidents, whereby his future enjoyment might be considerably impaired, and that, to make use of the words of Sir Charles Bell, "it answers " this purpose better than the thick skin of rhinoceros would have done." The bones, joints, and ligaments may be cut, pricked, or burned without causing the slightest pain, since injuries of this nature could not reach them, without a previous warning having been received through the sensibility of the skin; but they suffer from blows, sprains, and fractures, from which they are not so defended. The heart and the brain are the most vital organs of the body: no injury can reach them except through its other parts, none of which they can in any way protect. It does not appear that their sensitiveness could have been subservient to any beneficent purpose, and it has been ascertained by experiment that they are both of them incapable of feeling pain. Thus we find that the Author of our nature has exercised His care, as

regards the body, in saving it from all suffering that is not in the end positively beneficial. May we not, then, expect to find the same benevolent arrangement in all the other apparent evils to which His creatures are subject? An instinctive horror of death is given to them to preserve life, in the same manner as the sensitiveness of the skin is given to defend the body; is it not probable that, as the sensitiveness of the latter diminishes as the parts so defended are arrived at, so does the horror of death diminish on its near approach; and that, as the vital parts are totally devoid of feeling, so is the separation of the soul from the body unattended by any corporeal, or mental agony, which could answer no purpose in the economy of our nature, of which we are aware? The absence of corporeal pain seems also probable from that very physical constitution of the body regarding its sensitiveness, to which we have referred; and it is in some degree confirmed by observation. We see men, who, in the fulness of lusty life, had as much horror of death as any of the species, view its near and certain approach with calm indifference, and in their last moments appear perfectly resigned and willing to depart, even though they may be entirely free from suffering, and cannot be said to look upon death as a release. Those who have recovered from paroxysms apparently mortal, have declared that they did not

undergo any pain or disagreeable sensation whatever, at the time that their spirit seemed to have fled. Why, then, should the dissolution of the body be considered an evil?

The death of friends, and the separation from those that were beloved, though the immediate cause of much grief and heavy affliction, are not without their compensating advantages to beings passing through a state of probation. The occasional periods of sorrow, caused by visitations of this sort, must be looked upon as epochs in life, wherein man is called upon to forget for a while its tumults and cares, and devote himself to meditation. They constantly remind the wise that they have no abiding city here; that they must not set their affections too much on things below; for that even the purest and most holy of earthly joys, those arising from love and friendship, are fleeting and perishable. And these afflictions are often the means of recalling the careless and indifferent from the error of their ways. How many owe their reformation to the impression made upon them by a death-bed scene! How many feel themselves better prepared to give an account of their stewardships, when left alone for a few years, after the friends of their former life are departed! We cannot but think that death finds the majority of men in a better state under the present order of

things, than if those who were connected together by the ties of near relationship or friendship, were all summoned at one and the same time to stand before the Judgment-seat of their Maker.

Never perhaps does the tyrant Death appear more cruel, than when the young, the gay, and the innocent are suddenly called away from a world, where they appear to enjoy so much happiness, to die, and go they know not whither. But, alas! are the warnings given to mankind by untimely and sudden deaths more than are necessary for their frail and erring natures? Are the young too thoughtful, the healthy too mindful of their latter end? Is there not too much reason to fear that, if none were cut short in the midst of their days, few would live as if they were to die? How would the gracious promises of mercy and forgiveness of sins be abused, if none were to depart till they attained a certain age, or without what they might deem a sufficiently long notice! Would not such an arrangement cause men to postpone all serious thought or preparation for a future life, till such time as they knew, from old age or incipient illness, that their present existence was drawing to a close, when they might have become incapable of amelioration from previous habits of neglect and self-indulgence? The complete ascendancy, that habits of long standing acquire over man, need not be

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dilated on. We are commanded like sentinels to watch, and be ready at all hours. Without this constant state of preparation, we might find it difficult to get ready at the last, even though we knew the time of our allotted sojourn here. Under the existing order of things, the young man may rejoice in the days of his youth, and his heart may cheer him, but every untimely or sudden death must remind him, in the words of the inspired preacher, to "remember his Creator in the days of his youth, while the evil days come not, or the years draw nigh, when he shall say, I have no pleasure in them."

Again, in the troubles, sorrows, and adversities, to which this life is subject, and with which we believe most have been at some time visited, we behold an excellent provision made by the Almighty, for disciplining the proud spirit of man, and weaning him from too great attachment to the things of time and sense. A state of probation implies trials, difficulties, and dangers. Indeed, we can hardly conceive how He could have made it one of unalloyed happiness and prosperity to man, unless He had willed his future destruction. Few are able to stand a short continuance of prosperity; all are made better by adversity. What would be the consequence to beings constituted as the average of mankind are, and passing

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through a probationary state, such as we have imagined this life to be, if everything were to happen to each individual, just as he himself wished—if he were to be subjected to no vexation, no disappointment, no mortification whatever? The evil effects which continued indulgence produces on the temper and disposition of a child are proverbial, and few are not the better for timely severity and castigation. So much are mankind agreed upon the latter point, that the majority of parents, whether wisely or not we do not pretend to say, send their children to school at an early age, avowedly for the purpose of subjecting them to tyranny and hardship. In this world all men are children, as regards their preparation for the next. If life were continually prosperous, would not the pleasures and pursuits of the world engross the thoughts of all? Would they not totally stifle the occasional admonitions of conscience? How little time would they allow their votaries for reflection on the last solemn account they must one day give of themselves before the Judgment-seat of God? The wisest and best of men are most fearful of the intoxication of prosperity, the most ready to bow with resignation before the chastening rod of adversity. Many of them will acknowledge, that they were first brought to reflect seriously on the object and

purpose of their present existence, and to perceive the vanity of this world, and the immense importance of attending to their future welfare, by some mortification, which humbled their pride, or some affliction, which subdued their spirit. It is a pleasing thing to the pious, to be able to trace the hand of a benevolent Providence in looking back upon afflictions which at one time appeared to them unmerited misfortunes. The Scriptures tell us that whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth. But the inspired authors also tell us, that like as a father pitieth his children, even so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him; and that all things work together for good to them that love Him. Those who believe in the Divine authority of these writings, will infer from these and other passages, wherein the Lord is praised for His goodness and His loving-kindness towards the sons of men, that they are not destined to undergo a greater portion of sorrow or trouble, than will in the end be beneficial for them; that as these are designed to chasten, subdue, and prepare them for a better state, so will they cease when this end is attained. As we know that, with respect to corporeal suffering, the human body is not more sensitive of pain than is in the end absolutely beneficial, and, as we have reason to believe with respect to death, that there is no evil

in it apart from the instinctive dread of it, which has been given for the sake of self-preservation, may we not infer that He will not allow us to be afflicted with a greater meed of adversity of any sort, than is required for our chastisement and improvement?

It may be objected against this, that we constantly see the most meek, humble, and virtuous of mankind subjected to unceasing misfortunes and persecutions; and it may be asked, what good purpose can be attained by the continual chastisement of those who are already of sufficiently humble and subdued dispositions? But who can tell his own secret thoughts or sins, much less those of another person? Who can say of himself or any other mortal that he will not be improved by adversity? The absurdity and presumption of assertions of this nature, is made manifest and reprehended in the Book of Job. Perhaps many of those, whom the world considers as meek and humble, might have their characters and dispositions completely changed by prosperity, or even by a temporary cessation of ill fortune. The tamer of the human breast, adversity, may be as necessary to preserve them in a proper state of mind, as it was originally required to subdue them.

This view of the Almighty government is open also to the same objections that have been urged



against a special Providence and the efficacy of prayer. For it may be urged, that as the mechanical part of the universe is governed by an established system of laws, these laws, though on the whole the best that could have been ordained, may often cause great sufferings to one individual quite irrespective of moral considerations. It has been said, that "the Deity operates in the most august of His works by fixed laws; an arrangement which it is clear admits only of the primary results being good, but disregards exceptions;" and that "moral considerations have not the least concern in the working of the physical laws. Of course, we do not deny the fixity of these laws by which the universe is governed. We have endeavoured to show that, by supposing the universe, such as we now behold it, to have been formed by law out of the primeval chaos, we have before us a far greater example of Divine power and wisdom, than would be presented to the mind, if all the specimens which we have of the workmanship of the Almighty, were to be regarded as the results of separate and isolated fiat of creation. For aught we know to the contrary, it may have been ordained from the beginning, that the working of the fixed laws of physics may be conducive to moral good in innumerable special instances. There is nothing impossible in the supposition, that

there may be a preconcerted relation between these laws and the moral character of the beings whom they are to affect. It is clear that the difficulties and dangers which may arise from the continued actions of these laws, as they affect each individual, constitute part of the trials necessary to his probationary state. His partial knowledge of these laws, as indicating to him the methods whereby he is most likely to escape danger and temptation, and may best secure his temporal and eternal happiness, exercise his wisdom, foresight, and sagacity. And, as we before remarked, there is no reason to suppose that we are all placed in equally favourable conditions as regards our probationary state. Some may be subjected to greater trials and difficulties, some may be required to give greater proof of their virtue and moral qualities, than others. It may be that one man may be tried by prosperity as much as another may be by adversity. As we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office, so are different offices assigned to different men, and their moral qualities are tried in different situations. And we must always recollect that justice and revelation alike tell us, that "Unto whom much is given, from him shall much be required." And it must be borne in mind, that although events which the world deem misfortunes, often appear to happen to individuals, irrespective

of moral considerations, yet the affliction and the sorrow which they really cause, vary considerably according to the temper and disposition of the sufferer. To some, in the midst of their apparent prosperity, there is sent a faintness of heart, so that they are terrified at the sound of a falling leaf, while others are so supported by Him, in whom they trust, that they are not afraid of the plague by night, nor of the pestilence that slayeth during the day. As the child cries for the loss of toys and other sources of amusement and gratification which the man despises, so does one mortal who is entirely engrossed with the affairs of time and sense, mourn bitterly over many deprivations which he, whose treasure is elsewhere, bears with calm indifference. That which is a severe disappointment to the spoilt child of fortune, is borne with philosophic calmness by one who has learned to live above the world, and who is accustomed to its adversities. But, as we endeavoured to show in our discourse concerning a special Providence and the efficacy of prayer, that while the Almighty works by laws, which appear to be fixed and immutable, He may interpose by means of those very laws to alter the succession of events in any manner that seems good unto Him; and, inasmuch as the physical laws of the universe, though on the whole beneficial, may appear to some to disregard exceptions,

and to be quite independent of the moral character of the person on whom they act; do not the considerations to which we have alluded, justify us in supposing that He does so interpose; that, by means of such interpositions, He does guard those who put their trust in Him from all unnecessary pain and misfortune, as well as from temptations they are not able to bear; or that with the temptation He will make a way to escape; that when they are suffering from adversity or affliction of any kind, He by His power will alleviate their sufferings, and will order all things so that they will in the end turn out for their advantage? Of course, it will be understood from our making use of the expression "in the end," that we do not limit our views to the time of man's pilgrimage upon earth. Indeed, it appears to us to be an admirably contrived system of probation in which the creature, whose character is to be tried and improved, is placed in a scene subject to all the shocks, difficulties, and dangers which arise from the obedience of the surrounding elements to laws which are fixed and immutable, and which affect different individuals regardless of their seeming merits; that he should remain subject to all the difficulties and dangers which must necessarily arise from such an arrangement, till chastened and subdued by these very difficulties which some look upon as uncompensated evils, his nature

is weaned from lower affections and desires, and he learns to look with meekness and contrition to Him who alone can help, save, and defend him. Then, for the first time, he seeks to know His will, and to make the performance of it the first object of his life, and learns, in the midst of all his troubles, to put his trust solely in Him. A stubborn and disobedient child would, if expelled from the home of his parents, and turned on the wide world without their aid or advice, soon feel the want of their care and protection, which he had formerly despised; and, if received back again, would in most cases submit himself gratefully and cheerfully to their orders. The human race may in this respect be likened to disobedient children. We believe that most of them require to be exposed some time, unaided and unprotected, to the rude and tempestuous billows of the world, before they learn, that “except the Lord keep them, their labour is but lost in vain.” We have a beautiful allegorical representation of this part of the government of the Almighty given to us in the 107th Psalm. There men are represented as travellers wandering in a desert till, hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them; as mariners tossed about in a tempest, till they reel to and fro like drunken men, and are at their wit’s end; in short, as being involved in perils and difficulties of all sorts, while following

their own devices, till they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivers them out of their distress. Therein we are told that fools, that is, those who neither have nor seek to possess that wisdom which cometh from above, because of their transgression and because of their iniquity are plagued and draw near unto the gates of Death, till they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivers them out of their distress. We are also told that they who are wise "will observe" these things; even they shall understand the "loving-kindness of the Lord." What an answer do these simple words afford to the arguments of those who, elated in their own conceits, criticise the constitution of the universe, and draw objections therefrom against the moral government of the Almighty.

From the marked indications of design that have been traced throughout the creation, coupled with the above considerations, it might be inferred that the troubles and adversities apparently caused by the established law of the universe, should be in some degree adapted to the temperament and constitution of the beings who are placed in a state of probation, and their severity proportioned to their inward depravity or stubbornness, which it is necessary to correct. And, in accordance with this inference, we are positively told in the Revelations,

which we deem to be authentic, that, in the beginning of the world, the nature of man was pure and holy, and that he was placed in a state of unalloyed happiness, well adapted to the constitution with which he was then endowed; that, after his nature had become corrupted and depraved, his condition in this world underwent a corresponding alteration; that, from being one of unmixed happiness and serenity, it was clouded with troubles and adversities. How beautifully is the condition to which he was subjected at the time of his fall, expressed in the words, "Behold I will greatly multiply thy sorrow;" "Cursed is the ground for thy sake;" "In sorrow shall thou eat thereof; "Thorns" also and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee!" This deteriorated state was evidently necessary for the altered constitution of man. As regards the adaptation of the world's trials to the individual man, we have good reasons to suppose that each person is exposed to them unaided and unguarded, merely till his corrupt and fallen nature becomes chastened and subdued, and he learns to look up with meekness and piety to his Maker; that after the regeneration in his life and conduct, consequent thereon, has taken place, he is guarded and aided in all his trials and cares by the providence of His goodness.

We are aware that the doctrine of the fall of

man, and the consequent wickedness, corruption, and depravity of his descendants, has appeared to many to be fraught with insuperable difficulties. We have already referred to the evidence we have of the fallen state of man, and its connexion with the present appearance of things in our discourse concerning Free Will and Necessity, and it would be quite foreign to our purpose to answer the objections that have been drawn therefrom against the Christian Revelation. To vindicate the revealed ways of God to man forms no part of our design. But we did not consider ourselves prohibited from referring to this event, confirmed as it is by ancient traditions of almost every nation, to illustrate our reasonings in Natural Theology, merely because it forms the basis of the Christian religion. We would refer the reader who wishes to be satisfied on this subject, to Chalmers's 25th Discourse on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans, where it appears to us to be treated of in a manner that must convince any impartial inquirer of the justice as well as of the goodness of the Almighty.

After all that we have said, it would be needless to expatiate on the reasons why, in a state of probation, the bounties of Providence should seem to be distributed so capriciously ; why the vicious should often appear to prosper, and the virtuous to be oppressed. There are many things, which when



men seek to know, at first are "too painful for them, till they go into the sanctuary of God ; then " may they understand their end." It must be borne in mind that the generality of men are not always correct in their judgment concerning the real merit of individuals, nor in their opinion of their true happiness or misery, which latter they are wont to form entirely from the appearance of their external circumstances. And we have already remarked that, even in this world, virtue generally conducts in the long run to the external prosperity of individuals, and vice in the same manner generally brings its followers to adversity and ruin. But, if the virtuous man were always rewarded and exalted immediately after his good deeds, before the eyes of the multitude, and the evil-doers immediately diminished and brought low, where would be the temptation to vice, or the probation of virtue? In this state of trial, men are required to forsake vice in spite of its apparent allurements, and to be patient in well-doing in spite of the apparent sacrifices which such a course may entail. Nevertheless we believe that there is no truth more firmly established by the reason and by the observation of mankind, than that one which, from universal applicability, is now become trite, " Virtue alone is happiness " below."

We have already referred to the disappointment

and dissatisfaction which is felt by all who are too much engaged in the pursuits of the world, as indicating some probable ulterior design on the part of the Almighty. He who views this life as a state of probation, may see therein a benevolent arrangement to prevent man from being too much engrossed with worldly affairs,—a constant reminder, that these are not to be the chief end or object of his existence. We ask any impartial thinker, whether, under this constitution of things, men are not much more likely to keep in view their future happiness, than if experience told them that there was much solid satisfaction in the pursuit of pleasure, wealth, or honour, or in any of the other engagements which are apt to dazzle the majority of men at the beginning of their career in this world? To a certain extent every one is engaged in the business and pleasures of life, which afford a source of moderate enjoyment, and a means of trying and improving his moral character. But, as persons travelling through a strange country, with a fixed destination, may occupy themselves with any objects of interest or amusement that may present themselves to them on their journey, and may sometimes make choice of different routes, provided they do not allow considerations of ease or amusement, to cause any delay or deviation that may be prejudicial to the object of their journey; so may man, in passing

through his earthly pilgrimage, endeavour as far as in him lies to select that path in which he thinks he has most chance of such happiness as his present state may afford him, and may enjoy the pleasures and mingle in the occupations of the world, always taking diligent care that they do not make him unmindful of the ultimate purport and object of his existence. And, lest these pursuits and occupations should too frequently have this effect, the Almighty has wisely annexed feelings of disappointment and dissatisfaction to them, when they too much engross the time and attention of any individual. Without this beneficial provision, we are inclined to think that few could use the present world without abusing it. Now, everything tends to remind men that they have no abiding city here. Herein we behold an admirable display of the wisdom and the goodness of the Almighty—while men are passing through a state of probation, He enables them to see the vanity and the insignificance of the things by which they are tempted.

We now propose to apply these considerations to some of the particular evils of society, of which an explanation is given in the "Vestiges;" hoping to prove that, allowing our present existence to be a state of probation, there is nothing in them hard to be reconciled either with the goodness or the power of the Creator. War, famine, and pesti-

lence are justly deemed among the greatest evils, to which mankind in the mass are subject. But we have already endeavoured to show that there were satisfactory reasons why a perfectly wise and benevolent Being should have made creatures passing through a state of probation subject to divers misfortunes, pain, and death, which are, in fact, the very evils which these national calamities bring upon individuals. To the individual sufferers it matters not by what means these evils are brought on. Ten thousand men may be killed in battle in one day, or a large proportion of the inhabitants of any city may be carried off by plague or famine in a short period of time; but in none of these cases are the individual victims greater objects of commiseration than those who undergo the same sufferings elsewhere. The fate of a soldier who falls in action, is not harder than that of him who is strangled by the Thug in India, or shot by the highwayman in Europe; perhaps neither suffer so much as those who are the victims of lingering diseases. We are not wont to regard Pericles as a greater object of compassion because he fell a victim to the plague of Athens, than we should have done, if he had died of any ordinary disease at any other period. To the Omnipresent and Omniscient Ruler of the Universe, who is everywhere, and beholds at once

all the different events that take place in different parts of the globe, it must be indifferent whether ten thousand murders, or deaths from contagious disease occur simultaneously in the same place, or in different parts of the globe at different times, provided that in the former case the aggregate amount of suffering is not greater than in the latter. If we had the statistics of the proportion of the deaths of the whole earth, in which, of course, must be included those that are caused by war, famine, and contagious diseases, as compared with the population in each year, it might be found that this proportion was not greater than the average, in the year of the great plague of London, or in that of the battle of Waterloo ; we certainly should not expect to find it greater, if we extended the period to three years, so as to include the years immediately preceding and following these great national events. It has been asserted that in the year 1846-7, three hundred thousand deaths took place in Ireland from starvation, or from diseases caused by insufficient nourishment; but will any one maintain that the mortality of the whole globe caused by want, poverty, or lingering diseases of an equally painful nature, was greater than usual during that one year ? still less can it be asserted, if we extend the period to three years, beginning with the autumn of the year 1844. And if any one is

satisfied that there do exist good reasons why a wise Author of the Universe should have subjected man to disease and mortality, it surely would be presumptuous in him to attempt to fix the average amount of such that He should permit. It must be acknowledged that these so-called national calamities, when they do occur, make a more vivid impression, draw forth stronger feelings of sympathy, and often appal and terrify mankind, much more than cases of individual suffering. And much moral good may arise from these feelings of sympathy and of awe, which are so excited in the minds of men from the circumstance of a vast amount of misery or suffering being brought within the sphere of their observation, which they might, however, behold at all times, if their faculties were enlarged. To those who are merely witnesses of such calamities, when a certain amount of the misery existing in the world is brought before them, the effect must be the same as if they were allowed, by some miraculous interposition, to behold the same amount existing simultaneously in different places. And we believe, that there are few who do not fancy, that they themselves would be made better and wiser from such an enlargement of their faculties, for however limited a period. In reading the "Paradise Lost," no one

will find fault with Milton for supposing a friendly spirit to bring Adam to a place whence he beheld—

A place, sad, noisome, dark,  
A lazar-house it seemed, wherein were laid  
Numbers of all diseased ; all maladies  
Of ghastly spasm, or racking tortures, qualms  
Of heart-sick agony, all fevrous kinds,  
Convulsions, epilepsies, fierce catarahs,  
Intestine stone and ulcer, cholic pangs,  
Demoniac phrenzy, moping melancholy,  
And moon-struck madness, pining atrophy,  
Macasmus, and wide-spreading pestilence,  
Dropsies and asthmas, and joint-racking rheums.

Yet we find men presumptuous enough to criticize the goodness of the Almighty for occasionally bringing a portion of the misery of the world within the scope of the human faculties. It is a common saying, that one half of the world do not know how the other half live, and philanthropists are often heard to express a wish that the rich might be made in person to behold the wants and sufferings of their poorer brethren, for however limited a period. Periods of great national suffering appear to be designed in some degree to remove the causes of these frequently expressed complaints and regrets. Appalling scenes of misery at these times, when brought before the eyes, soften the hearts and reform the conduct of

many, who otherwise might have continued to spend their lives in one continued round of frivolity and amusement. These visitations, for a time at least, remove the barriers which divide the different classes of society; they may serve to remind men, that they are all fellow-servants of one God, and fellow-travellers to the same goal. What isolated calamities are to the individual man, national calamities are to the aggregate of individuals that compose a nation. The habits and customs of a whole nation may be chastened and improved by them, as one man may be corrected by the sufferings which press peculiarly upon him. And it must be allowed that there are many evil habits and customs which are more national than individual sins. We have often heard good men regret the existence of laws and customs which, if not positively wrong in themselves, often lead people to evil. Though the conformity to such laws and customs cannot be regarded as a sin in any one individual, yet their prevalence may be regarded as a national sin. It may be a part of the Divine government to improve nations, as well as individuals, by temporary punishments. And it must be allowed that national calamities are often the immediate cause of the removal of many of the greatest evils which press upon society. Internal discords and commotions may lead to the reform



of civic abuses, or they may cause the rulers of a country to turn their attention to the general condition of the mass of the inhabitants, the investigation of which may be of incalculable benefit. It is impossible to say how many harsh and oppressive laws may thus have been annulled at different periods among the nations of the world—or how much the greatest happiness of the greatest number may thus have been improved. The extensive prevalence of any contagious disease in a great city may induce scientific men to investigate its causes, and lead to the discovery of the best preventives and cures. For aught we know to the contrary, the Almighty may gradually use these means to remove the numerous phalanx of diseases to which the human race is subject. Moreover, the removal of the cause of one evil may often remedy many others besides that one which first attracted the attention of the public. Not long ago, even the fear of the approach of the Cholera, made our legislators turn their attention to the sanitary condition of the large towns in the British empire, from which innumerable benefits to the community at large must result. The appalling distress of the manufacturing districts of England in the years 1841 and 1842 must be allowed to have been mainly instrumental in causing the removal of those unnatural and impolitic laws, which

prevented the English artisan from exchanging the produce of his labour for the food grown in other countries, and has possibly laid the foundation of a system, which may tend beyond anything to promote the peace of the world, and the civilization of the human race. There are many who are sanguine enough to believe, that the late Irish famine may be the cause of the eventual improvement of that hitherto unhappy country. Perhaps, then, these national calamities may be necessary for the permanent progress and improvement both physically and morally of the human race.

We are aware that this idea may be subjected to the same ridicule that has been cast upon that of particular individuals being afflicted by the Almighty for their chastisement and improvement. The same answer, however, may be made to the objections in both cases. The objections that have been urged against the latter we have considered, and endeavoured to answer at some length; and those that may be urged against the former, can be disposed of in precisely the same manner. It would be as presumptuous to assert concerning a nation, as it would be concerning an individual, that it did not require punishment, or that it was in no manner improved, by its chastening visitation. And even if the latter could be asserted concerning a nation, it would merely show that nations as well

as individuals sometimes become so hardened in vicious customs that nothing will cure them. We believe that the trite proverb, "Virtue alone is happiness below," of the truth of which we declared our conviction in our remarks concerning the apparent inequality of the distribution of the favours of fortune among men, is as applicable to nations as to individuals. We have already in our dissertation concerning national prayers, alluded to the natural tendency of virtue to promote the external prosperity of a nation. And to show how national virtue may tend to mitigate and ward off the internal evils of famine, poverty, and disease, we cannot do better than to quote the words of Dr. Chalmers, used in his preface to his "Commercial Discourses," the truth of which, we believe, may be fully demonstrated by reason, and confirmed by experience:—

" We simply state it as our opinion, that if the  
" business of the world were in the hands of men  
" thoroughly Christianized, and who, rating wealth  
" according to its real dimensions on the high  
" scale of eternity, were chastened out of their  
" idolatrous regards to it, yet would trade even in  
" these circumstances be carried to the extreme  
" limit of its being really productive or advisable.  
" An affection for riches is not essential to any  
" extension of commerce, that is at all valuable or  
" legitimate, and in opposition to the maxim, that

“ the spirit of enterprise is the soul of commercial  
“ prosperity, do we hold that it is the excess of  
“ this spirit beyond the spirit of moderation of the  
“ New Testament, which, pressing on the natural  
“ boundaries of trade, is sure at length to visit  
“ every country where it operates with the recoil  
“ of all those calamities, which, in the shape of  
“ beggared capitalists, and unemployed operatives,  
“ and dreary intervals of bankruptcy and alarm,  
“ are observed to follow a season of overdone  
“ speculations.” We need scarcely point out how  
much these dreary intervals of bankruptcy and  
alarm are the immediate causes of sedition, privy  
conspiracy, and rebellion; of plague, pestilence,  
and famine; in short, of the greater number of  
those internal evils to which nations are subject. In-  
deed, for the most part, national calamities seem  
to be the natural consequences of national sins. The  
pious Christian, while he admits the existence  
of a special Providence, and the possibility of  
interpositions affecting the fortunes of nations, as  
well of individuals, cannot fail to admire this  
law as a remarkable proof of the wisdom and fore-  
sight of Him from whose counsels it emanated.

All the specific cases of misfortunes and acci-  
dents considered in the “ Vestiges” may be easily  
reconciled with the goodness of the Deity, on the  
principles that we have endeavoured to explain.

It may happen, that two persons ascending a scaffolding, the one a virtuous, the other a vicious man; the former, the less cautious of the two, ventures upon an insecure place, falls, and is killed; while the latter, choosing a better footing, remains uninjured. Or two physicians attending fever cases in a mean part of a large city, the one an excellent citizen, may stand in such a position with regard to the beds of the patients, as to catch the infection of which he dies in a few days; while the other, a bad husband, and a bad father, who, unlike the other, only attends such cases with selfish ends, takes care to be as much as possible out of the steam of infection, and accordingly escapes. Now, as we have before stated, we have no wish to find fault with the explanation of these apparent exceptions to Divine justice and the Divine benevolence given in the place whence we have made the above extract, namely, that the great Author of Nature has established laws for the operation of inanimate matter, which are quite unswerving, and totally independent of the moral laws of our nature, which are equally unswerving. But we have already endeavoured to show, that the existence of a special Providence, who pays the minutest attention to each individual, and may alter the succession of events, as He pleases, is by no means incompatible with the invariability of Nature's laws. And it must be

owned, that if the sole end and purport of man's creation was moderate enjoyment and happiness in this life, it might be difficult to reconcile the occurrence of such accidents with the benevolence and the moral justice of a special Providence, even for the reasons alleged above. But the great Ruler of our nature sees not things in the same light that man sees them. He sees events, as they affect the interests of individuals on the high scale of eternity. Now, when viewed in this light, it is impossible to say that the death of any one individual at a particular time, whether caused by accident or disease, is to him a positive evil. "The  
 " righteous man dieth, and men mourn for him,  
 " not knowing that he may be taken away from the  
 " evil to come." When occurrences, such as those to which we have referred, are duly considered, it may appear that the good man who meets with a fatal accident, terminates his probationary career with probably less pain than he might have suffered from disease, and is transplanted to a better and happier stage of existence ; and that the mode of his exit from this world may make an impression upon his less virtuous companion, which leads to his permanent amendment and reform. Thus, for aught we know to the contrary, such events, which some men, wise in their own conceits, are sorely puzzled to explain, may be so ordered, as to

be most conducive to the ultimate happiness of each of the individuals whom they affect.

Again, it is said with great truth, that "The sex  
" passion leads to great evils. But against these  
" evils, and against those numberless vexations  
" which have arisen in all ages from the attach-  
" ment of the sexes, place the vast amount of  
" happiness which is derived from this source, the  
" basis of the whole circle of the domestic affections,  
" the sweetening principle of life, the prompter of  
" all our most generous feelings, and even of our  
" most virtuous resolves and exertions, and every  
" ill that can be traced to it is but as dust in the  
" balance." Now, in the very nature of this  
passion, and in the manner in which both the  
good and the evil of which it is the cause flow  
from it, we see a peculiar adaptation to a pro-  
bationary state. It would be needless to specify the  
many evils arising from unrestrained self-indulgence  
in this passion, and to explain how they may be  
avoided by exercising a due control over it, and  
over the feelings of anger or resentment to  
which it may occasionally give rise; and how  
much of the happiness alluded to in the above  
extract, and which, it must be allowed, forms no  
inconsiderable portion of that allotted to man  
here below, arises from subjecting these incli-  
nations to the guidance of reason, and the re-

straints that may be shown to be necessary for the welfare of society. In order, then, that the evils to which this passion leads may be avoided, and that unmixed good may result from it, a certain degree of self-government is required from each individual. If man's hopes and prospects were limited to this life alone, it might be difficult to see any efficient reason why a benevolent Being should have endowed him with a nature so constituted, that the welfare of his species should impose on him the necessity of this restraint; to many, indeed, it might seem like the design of some malignant spirit to annoy and to tease him that they should be constantly excited by a passion, which a due regard to his fellow-creatures will not allow him to gratify. But if this life be regarded as a state of probation, it must be allowed to be an excellent arrangement for putting the virtue and self-command of each individual to the test. It would be easy to show that the restraints which are required for the general good of mankind, are the same as those which are enjoined in those revelations which we deem to be authentic, and on which they lay so much stress. The very fact of this coincidence must be admitted to be a very powerful auxiliary evidence of the Divine origin of these revelations. And, inasmuch as



regarding each individual, his happiness, even in this world, is best advanced by the exercise of that control over himself which the welfare of his fellow-creatures requires, while dissolute and profligate conduct is sure, in the end, to undermine the health both of mind and body, and, as it were, to bring its own punishment, without the appearance of Divine interposition, it may seem that herein the Almighty designed to give us a sort of presentment of the species of moral government he exercises over the universe, and a means of judging by analogy what sort of conduct in this life is most likely to conduce to happiness in a future state, supposing such to exist.

The same observations apply to man's desire of food, and to the fact that an innumerable class of diseases spring from his eating and drinking to excess. The gratification of the passions of hunger and thirst, are as necessary for the preservation of life, as that of the sexual passion is for the continuation of the species. Man has both these classes of desires in common with the brutes. The welfare of their species does not seem to require from them any check to the gratification of their instinctive desires. In the desire of food which we are now considering, it has been said "that a limitation of the mental faculties to definite manifestations, *vulgo* instincts, might have en-

“ abled us to avoid many errors ; but here again  
“ we are met by the consideration, that if we had  
“ been so endowed we should have been only as  
“ the lower animals are—wanting that transcend-  
“ ently higher character of sensation and power  
“ by which our enjoyments are made so much  
“ greater. In making the desire of food, for  
“ example, with us an indefinite mental manifes-  
“ tation instead of a definite one, which it mainly  
“ is among the lower animals, the Creator has  
“ given us a means of deriving far greater grati-  
“ fication from food (consistently with health)  
“ than the lower animals appear generally to be  
“ capable of. He has also given us reason as a  
“ guiding power to act over this and other pro-  
“ pensities, so that they may be prevented from  
“ becoming causes of malady. We can see that  
“ excess is injurious, and are thus prompted to  
“ moderation. We can see that all the things  
“ which we feel inclined to take are not healthful,  
“ and are thus exhorted to avoid what are  
“ pernicious.” Now, in the supposition that  
mankind derive far greater gratification from food  
than the lower animals appear to be capable  
of, we do not altogether concur. A great part of  
the time of the lower animals, with which we are  
familiar, is spent in eating. Many of them, in  
ruminating, appear to enjoy the pleasures of eating

over again. We are rather inclined to adopt the opinion expressed by Paley, that eating is the source of moderate gratification to man, and of great pleasure to animals. But, be this as it may, we quoted the above passages for the sake of remarking how admirably the peculiarities of man therein mentioned, as well as all others, in which he differs from the beasts, are suited to the purpose which we suppose his Creator to have had in view ; how the restraints required to be observed by him, as a trial of his moral faculties, are necessary also for his corporeal health ; how exactly the means by which he can best attain such enjoyment as is allotted to his race in this sphere, harmonise with those by which, according to our hypothesis, he must make provision for his happiness in a future state ; and how beautifully his whole physical constitution is adapted for a being passing through a state of probation.

THE END.

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